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spoiling
the fight

Friday January 12 1996

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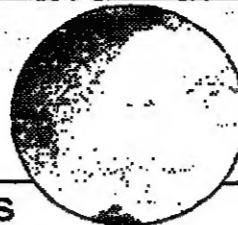
Graham Swift's sensational new novel

Review

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To Hell — and back

The good news for sinners



Pumpkin pie: will Britain swallow America's biggest rock band?

Plus: Mark Lawson on body fascism

Thatcher opens Tory wounds

Ex-leader spurns one-nation theory

Michael White
Political Editor

LADY THATCHER last night reopened the Conservative Party's barely-healed wounds following Emma Nicholson's defection by warning John Major against returning to the moderate "One Nation" Conservatism that she comprehensively rejected during her premiership.

Despite a damage limitation exercise, launched by senior ministers and MPs before the former prime minister's City of London lecture, her devastating — if coded — analysis of the Government's failure to "live up to our analysis and principles" angered the Tory left desperate to stem the so-called lurch to the right.

Dismissing as "baloney" peddled by malcontents suggestions that the Government is in trouble with voters for moving too far to the right, she took sides in the key economic debate by saying: "The test is simple. Just ask yourself, is it because the Government has not spent, borrowed and taxed enough that people are discontented? Or is it that we have gone too far?"

The answer was obvious. To Mr Major's discomfort she said: "We are unpopular, above all, because the middle classes — and all those who

aspire to join the middle classes — feel that they no longer have the incentives and opportunities they expect from a Conservative government."

To make her partisan message abundantly clear Lady Thatcher went on to say: "I am not sure what is meant by those who say that the party should return to something called One Nation Conservatism. As far as I can tell by their views on European federalism, such people's creed would be better described as 'No Nation Conservatism'."

The divisions exposed by the former prime minister delighted Labour — which has picked up the baton of "One Nation" supporters after the Tory party's problems — as much as her speech delighted Thatcherite Tories who want to pull Mr Major to the right.

Her barely-concealed message dismayed moderate Tory MPs who were already concerned that Lady Thatcher and her advisers had decided to go ahead with such a potentially divisive lecture after 10 hectic days in which her successor has battled to steady and unite his party after Emma Nicholson's defection to the Liberal Democrats.

Referring to her insistence on free and open debate, Tory moderate, Peter Luff, MP for Worcester complained: "The thing that most undermines the credibility of her argument is the suggestion that it is good for a party to have open debate and division" — not something she tolerated in power. Harlow's Jerry Hayes said she would not be forgiven for "making a virtue of disloyalty".

But rightwingers were quick to hit back. "No one can find fault with what she says. People will find this very easy to support," said the right-winger David Shaw, MP for Dover and Deal.

Mr Major himself uses "One Nation" language, as last night's television news bulletins quickly reminded viewers. Since Mr Blair is



Baroness Thatcher delivers her speech warning against a return to one-nation Conservatism. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

'We are unpopular, above all, because the middle classes — and all those who aspire to join the middle classes — feel that they no longer have the incentives and opportunities they expect from a Conservative government'

Rewriter of history raddled by vanity

Comment

Hugo Young

IT IS a measure of the deeply neurotic state of today's Conservative Party that Margaret Thatcher's speech should have mattered at all. It was mainly devoted, under the rubric of the sainted Keith Joseph, to yet another justification of that distant lion: herself.

Little of what the old lady said was seriously out of line with what the party of the hardening right is preparing to say at the election. Yet the fact that she spoke at all, signalling in every paragraph which side she backed, can be interpreted only as a malign intervention in the civil war over which her successor tries to pretend he is not presiding.

She broke fewer rules than she has done before. Perhaps she thought that by keeping Europe mostly out of it, she was doing him a favour. What she said on the great neutral subject was claptrap about the European Court and the sovereignty of Parliament we have often heard before.

On public spending, she pre-echoed the verbiage Mr Major and his cohorts will be pushing all year. Limiting government and releasing enterprise are mantras he utters as often as she does, each as blithely silent as the other on the failure of Thatcherism. In all these years, to have significantly dented the public share of national income.

She attacked the prime minister-in-waiting, as she almost acknowledged him to be, in the place where he is ripe for bruising, the heart and gut he will bring to curbing demands for money. These Tory scourgings of public spending having failed so dismally, it's a fair question: can

Tony Blair be an even bigger bastard? From Portillo to Dorrell, the Cabinet will work him over with a single voice.

Mr Dorrell, however, rated no mention by the baroness. If this is a broad church, she knows down which narrow aisle lies the only salvation for the faithful. With predictable unsobriety, the Thatcherite favourites got their mention, but the ecumenical spirit was about as prominent as it is in the sermons of Dr Paisley. This wasn't the speech of an elder statesperson, but of a re-writer of history, raddled by vanity, pressing the case for disciples like Howard and Portillo who are among the most unpopular politicians in Britain.

So, although covered by deniability, the speech deployed most of what it takes for the lady to add to the trouble the Tories are already in. It staked the ground for a post-election party in which Kenneth Clarke will have no place, unless he is prepared to commit to plans that will cut public spending "much more" than to a mere 40 per cent of GDP. This will be in the service of a view of the state which has a crackpot extremity it would be hard to credit unless one reads the following words carefully.

"The very existence of the state," she said, "with its huge capacity for evil, is a potential threat to all the moral, cultural, social and economic benefits of freedom."

With a certain amount of spin-doctoring, there's material here that might drown out the smirking innocence she brings to her criticism of the present leadership. But at bottom this was a harking back to days the party likes to remember but the country to forget, when the leader had what Major, she almost screamed at him, most pitifully lacks: "an unswerving belief that you have to be right."



Austin
LOOKS AS THOUGH IT WAS DONE WITH A HANDSAW.

The general who told his troops to tear up UN's Bosnia mandate

Philippe Morillon speaks out in an exclusive interview with Ed Vulliamy

GENERAL Philippe Morillon, one of the most flamboyant figures to have emerged from the Bosnian war, today lambasts the United Nations mandate covering the forces he led in Sarajevo, describing their rules of engagement as "a farce" and disclosing secret contacts with Nato.

In an exclusive interview with the Guardian, the general also reveals that he ordered the Anglo-French Rapid Reaction Force to tear up its UN mandate last summer — and attack Bosnian Serb positions.

Speaking for the first time since retiring from the French army last month, Gen Morillon — remembered most for his entry into battered Srebrenica in 1993 — tells how he sought between 1992 and 1993 to use force to secure a peace deal, as eventually happened last year.

But Gen Morillon says the UN leadership constrained

his troops with "a mandate of angelism — an illusion that the mere presence of UN soldiers with blue helmets and the blue flag would help to prevent the explosion."

The general is by far the most senior military commander to utter such views. He describes "angry crises" between Sarajevo and his Zagreb command, saying: "My permanent instinct was that you have to use force ... I repeated it every day: 'We have to be respected, if not, we have to withdraw'."

The French took the heaviest casualties of any UN contingent, and Gen Morillon insists that "to limit our ability to fire only when fired upon was much too restricted ... The idea of the 'right to legitimate defence' was a farce."

He defends the outspoken British commander, Colonel Bob Stewart, who shared his views and alarmed Britain's anti-interventionist politicians. "Stewart was right. I tried to back him all the way."

Gen Morillon details, for the first time, the fundamental rift over the whole purpose of the UN mission between commanders on the ground,

and "passive" leaders in Zagreb and New York.

Gen Morillon says he understood the purpose of the mission "to be resolutely opposed to the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing."

He also talks about his dealings with the Bosnian Serb military leader, General Ratko Mladic — who has been indicted for war crimes — and the president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic.

Gen Morillon gives details of the first known admission by Mr Milosevic that Serbian army regulars were sent to fight in Bosnia in defiance of undertakings to the West.

"When I went to see Milosevic, I spoke to him about this," says Gen Morillon. "He was obliged to admit to me that they were involved."

Gen Morillon reveals that he worked closely but "unofficially" with Nato while commander of UN forces in Bosnia, receiving Nato intelligence and bringing United States marines to Sarajevo. He shared his views

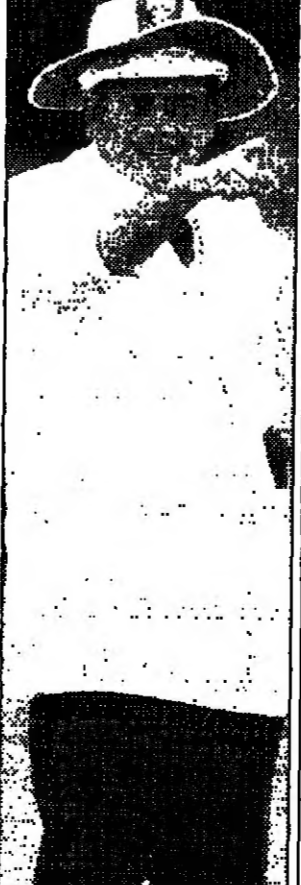
on the need for resolute action with the US admiral, Jim Boyer, then commander of Nato in southern Europe.

"We were in regular contact, entirely unofficially," says Gen Morillon. "I was getting a lot of help from Border in Naples. We established a personal axis of unofficial links between our staff. He was also providing me with US marines ... He was providing me with intelligence, but it was absolutely unofficial — it was simply a direct line between Philippe Morillon and Jim Boyer."

Gen Morillon goes on to describe his lobbying behind the scenes to bring about more robust action after leaving Sarajevo in July 1993. When serious force was finally deployed last year, it has emerged that he was commanding the Rapid Reaction Force from Paris.

He tells of his outrage when he heard that the force was bound by rules of engagement which only allowed it to fire to protect UN soldiers in danger, and how he ordered the force's commander in Sarajevo to either disregard those rules, or else be withdrawn.

No more replays for cricket's 'bonkers' record-breaker Bird



DICKIE BIRD (left), the Donkey Test umpire to have become a worldwide celebrity, will be contemplating his own dismissal today after agreeing to stand down from the international umpiring panel, writes David Hopps.

Bird, lovable eccentric and compulsive worrier, might still have occasion to add to his world record 65 Tests. At 62, he will remain on the Test and County Cricket Board's domestic panel next season, but his position as the world number one has gone.

"Cricket is my wife," chirped Bird, a bachelor, during Pakistan's tour of Australia last November, his last overseas assignment.

If anything has done for Barnsley's most famous export, it is the advent of technology. "I never look at TV replays: if I did, I'd go mad," he said in Australia. But, increasingly, others were looking — and were not always impressed.

Cricket's great and good have been universal in their appreciation. Ian Botham, praising "the best and fairest of all umpires", concluded: "Great bloke, completely bonkers."

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John Prescott

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Sketch

Many a slip allows Heseltine to shine



Mark Lawson

EVERY theatre-goer knows the wave of deflation, the smell of spoiled outings, that runs through a theatre when the little slip of paper spills out of the programme or the bow-tied stage manager breaks the curtains with the words: "The role of... will be played at this performance by..."

It has been slip-in-the-programme week at Westminster. On Tuesday and Wednesday, the roles of Michael Portillo and Malcolm Rifkind, at their departmental questions, were played by stumbling understudies, the leads still being abroad. Yesterday, audiences who had turned up to see Kenneth Clarke answer Treasury Questions discovered that his role was to be played by William Wadsworth.

O'Brien (Labour MP for Warwickshire North), who raised the question of Lady Thatcher's speech, due to be delivered last night, in which she opposed a single European currency. As Heseltine was "the one who wielded the knife that did her in", he asked, what did he think of this?

The Deputy Prime Minister replied that both Lady Thatcher and the Prime Minister fought for British interests in Europe. "Each must do it in his own way and his own context," he concluded, "the insistence on the male possessive either merely the grammar of a man of Hezza's generation or a feline gibe at the famous lady."

There was something a little tragic about Hezza's early departure for Major. It was as if a woman had refused to sleep with a man but permitted him a single kiss before kicking him out. Yesterday, though, it was a hell of a kiss.

Peter Pike (Labour MP for Burnley) asked him to reprise his reasons for opposing Thatcher. "As I look back on a long career in public service," replied Hezza, "I regard the fact that I played such a conspicuous role in the 1987 election campaign, in which Mrs Thatcher was re-elected, as no mean achievement."

Again, there were the glint of knives there if you looked for it. Warmed up, he reached for a prop: a Guardian cutting in which Ken Livingstone (Labour MP for Brent East) expressed mystification about the meaning of the new Blair sound-bite "stakeholder society".

"Mine's a saviour," yelled Dennis Skinner, but what Skinner is to jokes, Hezza is to rhetoric.

"I'll tell you what it means, he roared. "It means that the stakeholders that the Labour Party would be bringing back are... the unions, the single issue pressure groups, the local authorities and co-operatives."

The Tory backbenchers gave a sitting, but howling ovation. Real theatre had returned to Question Time. Some of them will have begun to fantasise again about not just a slip in the programme but a change of names on the marquee.

First night

Crackers about maracas

Judith Mackrell

Corazon Flamenco Sadlers Wells

EVER since Massine's Andalusian ballet, Le Tricorne, sent 1920s London flocking to Spanish dance classes, the British have proved susceptible to flamenco.

It may be that our northern souls ache for the kind of passion where men sing deep into the night about betrayal, and women weave erotic spells with their arms. It may be that flamenco is as close to the genuinely exotic as Europe gets.

For whatever reason, the British psyche seems to need it. During the late 1980s, London suffered its most acute bout of Spanish fever. Crowds of cool young women gave up their social lives to learn how to stomp through a serious sevillanas, who wear boy-friends hung out in tapas bars.

At the centre of it all, generating a huge amount of heat, was the smash hit, Cumbre Flamenco. The show was basically a string of music and dance numbers which had been funded by the Spanish government to display real flamenco to the world.

In place of the pretty ladies in mantillas peddled to tourists, the public were shown great artists, who were mostly Gypsies. Dour, dumpy women came on to the stage looking as if they were setting off to market but as soon as they started to dance they trampled demons beneath their feet.

With only a few variations, this show carried off four wildly successful seasons. But

its director, Francisco Sanchez, has obviously decided it is time for a new formula, so the first half of his new production Corazon Flamenco is taken up by a dance drama about illicit love and revenge.

The opening of Noche de Santiago looks promising as traditional bulerías and rumbas are used to establish a village community of gossip. The couple dancing the rumba are particularly sparky — she all tippy hips and high mocking kicks, he all dandy hauteur. But the married woman and her Gypsy lover at the centre of the plot are revealed far less convincingly.

Flamenco may communicate the heat of individual desire but it does not lend itself to the yielding love duet. However passionate their dancing — and Araturo Aguilera particularly performs with a fierce high-strung precision — it looks a little foolish when it is made to express things beyond its range.

But the show's second half returns, gloriously, to the old format allowing individuals to sparkle and glow unambiguously by plot. It is dominated by Manuela Carrasco, a big, breathtakingly severe woman who attacks her movements with a violent, even brutal power.

But almost matching her for duende is the singer, Susi, who can equally pitch her voice from a deep anguished growl to the keening of a lost soul. The other singers and guitarists are also mesmerising — and the final bulerías, when everyone joins in to show off their tricks, is the best party in town.

This review appeared in later editions of yesterday's paper.

Call to use lotteries to select pupils for schools

Donald MacLeod

CHILDREN should be chosen for popular schools by lottery to prevent "pushy middle class parents" manipulating admissions rules, an educationist says today.

Alan Smithers, professor of education at Manchester university, suggests pupils should have to obtain a certificate of

readiness for secondary education — passing thresholds for reading, spelling, writing and arithmetic.

If a school received too many applications, all its places should be randomly allocated. Professor Smithers, one of the country's leading education researchers, believes this would prevent oversubscribed schools operating backdoor social selection.



Anne Pingeot, Mitterrand's mistress, comforts their daughter Mazarine in Jarnac

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPE WOJAZER

France bids adieu as a socialist statesman is laid to rest with pomp and pastoral simplicity

Eyewitness

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

JUST as he would have liked and almost word-for-word as he had planned, Francois Mitterrand yesterday secured his passage from politics to history in an atmosphere loaded with symbols as powerful as they were contradictory.

In a letter accompanying his will, the former socialist president, who died on Monday aged 78, had stage-managed his final journey. It

would combine pomp and grandeur with the pastoral simplicity he espoused.

At a solemn requiem mass in Notre-Dame cathedral, 2,300 people — including 170 heads of state and government — mourned beneath rising incense smoke pierced by shafts of light. The Archbishop of Paris, Monsignor Jean-Marie Lustiger, presided and a choir sang.

Simultaneously, members of Mitterrand's family and 500 friends attended an identical service in Saint-Pierre, a parish church in Jarnac, his birthplace. Afterwards, the former president was buried in a drab family tomb.

Mitterrand, who died as a result of prostate cancer, had

thought of most things — even that his Labrador, Baltic, should travel with his coffin from Paris to Jarnac. But if he had wished to bequeath the image of a great 20th century figure, he needed the unprompted endorsement of another doyen of politics. At Notre-Dame during the Pie Jesu from Fauré's Requiem, the imposing figure of the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, provided it by crying.

And if France is prepared to accept Mitterrand's links with the wartime Vichy regime, it still likes a happy ending. Danielle Mitterrand provided it in Jarnac by being flanked, at the coffin, by her husband's mistress, Anne Pingeot, and their daughter, Mazarine.

Thatcher opens Tory wounds

Continued from page 1

With Mr Major away in Paris attending the memorial service for France's socialist president, Francois Mitterrand, it fell to his deputy, Michael Heseltine, and the party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, to insist that Lady Thatcher's real message was not "devastating" attack on Mr Blair, his newly-unveiled "stakeholder society" and

zeal for high taxes, Europe and constitutional change. Understandably, Dr Mawhinney also saw it as a unity speech. "Baroness Thatcher has underlined again why only our party and our government can be trusted to provide the freedom and choice for individuals on which depend job creation, increasing personal prosperity and wealth."

Mr Redwood also defended his heroine from "malice aforethought" in the timing of her speech, a quietly-delivered tribute to her own mentor, Lord Joseph. Admirers ruefully admitted that Lady Thatcher would be surprised at overnight media reporting. "Is she naive or egotistical?" asked one MP.

Labour has opened up a 39.5 point lead ahead of the Tories in an opinion poll published in today's Daily Telegraph. More than 1,000 electors were interviewed between January 3 and 8 in 100 districts nationwide. The results showed support for Labour at 60.5 per cent with 21 per cent backing the Tories. The Liberal Democrats are at 14.4 per cent.

Threat lifted for asylum seekers

Alan Travis Home Affairs Editor

THE Government lifted the threat of imminent destitution for 13,000 asylum seekers last night but announced that from next month new applicants who fail to make a claim as soon as they arrive in Britain will lose their right to claim benefits.

The Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley, told the Commons he was pressing ahead with his plans despite a highly critical report from the Government's advisory committee which warned yesterday that they were "potentially racially divisive" and would not achieve the claimed savings of £300 million a year.

The announcement represented a U-turn over a policy "designed to smoke out Labour" and which was announced with fanfares at the Conservative Party conference in October.

The Refugee Council and the Churches had made preparations to set up emergency shelters and feeding centres in anticipation of thousands of asylum seekers ending up on the streets when the benefit changes were brought into effect.

The social security advisory committee, chaired by General Sir Thomas Boyd-Carpenter, backed their assessment. "We do not believe that it is acceptable that solution should be sought by put-

ting at risk of destitution many people who are genuinely seeking refuge in this country, amongst whom may be numbered some of the most vulnerable and defenceless in our society."

The concessions offered by Mr Lilley in the Commons yesterday were designed to defuse a growing revolt among Conservative MPs and to head off High Court legal action by local authorities.

Mr Lilley announced a "transitional package" to meet their immediate concerns. He said the 13,000 asylum seekers who had lodged refugee claims since October will continue to get benefit until their claims and appeals are rejected. From February 8, new asylum applicants who fail to make a claim as soon as they arrive in Britain — about 70 per cent of cases — will lose all rights to claim welfare benefits.

The package will also cover some of the extra costs faced by local authorities in providing temporary accommodation to homeless asylum seekers. It is thought that this will amount to at least £13 million.

The social security advisory committee report said the concessions would mitigate the immediate effect of the proposals but did not alleviate their concerns or provide a long-term solution.

It was a view supported by Labour, Shelter, the Refugee Council, Amnesty International and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

Clinton on Hillarygate defensive

Martin Walker and Jonathan Freedland in Washington

THE United States president, Bill Clinton, went before the nation last night to defend his wife Hillary against accusations that she had lied under oath and abused her position as First Lady.

A rare televised press conference was aimed to subject Mr Clinton to a grilling over his wife's veracity on the Whitewater affair and her role in the sacking of White House travel-office staff two years ago.

In recent days Republicans and their conservative allies in the media, who have singled out Mrs Clinton for unusually vitriolic criticism, have successfully revived the Whitewater affair — a disastrous property investment by the Clinton family in Arkansas financed by a bank that later went broke amid allegations of a conflict of interest.

Mr Clinton was the Arkansas governor, and his wife was a member of the law firm that worked for the bank, Madison Guaranty.

But earlier yesterday, Mr Clinton received unexpected support from the star witness before the Republican-controlled Senate hearings into Whitewater.

Richard Massey, a former colleague of Mrs Clinton at the Rose law firm in Arkansas, corroborated her story that he, and not she, had initiated and undertaken most of the legal work for the bank at the heart of the affair.

"No evidence, no knowledge, no liability," said Christopher Dodd, a Democratic senator and the party's chairman. He added that the Republican-run committee had withheld from the press and public formal legal reports commissioned by federal regulators which had concluded that the Clintons had no case to answer.

There is nothing to hold these conspiracy theories together other than political or personal enmity against the president and First Lady," Mr Dodd said.

Mr Clinton went on to the

offensive as a report in Money magazine claimed that legal bills now running at \$2 million (£1.25 million) a year had put him and his wife "on a collision course with bankruptcy".

Mike McCurry, the White House press secretary, admitted: "They are facing some real financial difficulties, that's true." But more than \$1 million has already been raised by the Clintons' legal defence fund.

Trouble came on another front yesterday as leaked documents on the so-called "Travelgate" affair appeared to confirm that Mrs Clinton had ordered the 1993 purge of White House travel staff, which she has always denied.

"May is — ERC pressure" — the then White House chief of staff, Thomas McLarty — referring to Mrs Clinton — had scribbled in a note taken during a meeting.

The Clintons are accused of sacking the travel staff on trumped-up charges in order to replace them with cronies from Arkansas headed by a second cousin of the president. This is the second piece of written evidence which flatly contradicts Mrs Clinton's version. Last week, a memo by another former White House aide was released revealing that he believed there would be "hell to pay" if he did not carry out her wishes that they be summarily dismissed.

The real drama yesterday came in the senate. A special committee, using the room where the inquiries into President Richard Nixon were held 20 years ago — in which Mrs Clinton was herself a junior lawyer — asked a revised version of the classic Watergate question: what did the First Lady know, and when did she know it?

"The American people have a right to know the full facts about Whitewater," Senator Alfonse D'Amato, the Republican committee chairman, said. But Mr Massey firmly rejected Republican claims that he had ever conspired with the White House or other Rose law firm colleagues to alter his story.

Indeed, Mr Massey confirmed most of Mrs Clinton's claims that she had a hands-off role in the legal affairs of the Madison Guaranty bank.

Five held over head's murder

FIVE arrests were made yesterday in connection with the murder of London headmaster Philip Lawrence, and four arrests in connection with the robbery of John Mills, husband of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbara Mills. Last night Scotland Yard was refusing to comment on suggestions that the arrests were linked, writes Duncan Campbell.

The five arrested in connection with the murder of Mr Lawrence were being interviewed at five separate cen-

tral London police stations. The four held in connection with the attack on Mr Mills were being held at Paddington in central London.

In the Lawrence case the five were arrested yesterday morning at different addresses.

They were described as being aged 17 and from Holloway, aged 15 from Camden, aged 15 from Crouch Hill, all north London; aged 14 from Harrow Road, west London; and aged 16 from central London.

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Health service faces lethal cocktail of problems, BMA chairman warns

Government attacked over bed and staff shortages and community care 'failure'

Chris Millill
Medical Correspondent

A SHORTAGE of hospital beds has combined with staff shortages, a misplaced Government policy on waiting lists and a failure of community care to produce "a potentially lethal cocktail of problems" in the National Health Service, the chairman of the British Medical Association said yesterday.

Dr Sandy Macara revealed that some hospitals had come close to treating patients on the floor after running out of trolleys as well as during peak periods of the latest admissions crisis over Christmas and the New Year.

One hospital was reduced to treating patients in ambulances parked outside the unit, and many others had cancelled routine surgery to cope with emergency admissions. Some family doctors were spending hours on the telephone trying to get their patients admitted to medical or surgical wards.

The BMA said a consistent rundown of beds over recent years had left the hospital system unable to cope with seasonal fluctuations in admissions caused by flu, falls, respiratory problems and other winter illnesses.

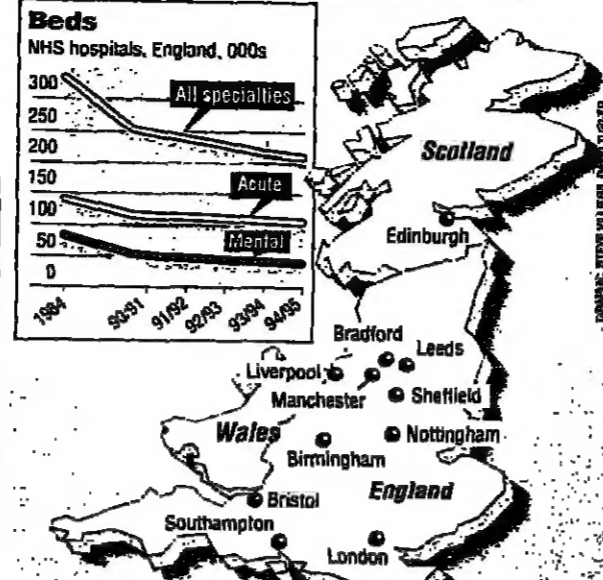
Some units faced staff shortages, so even where beds were available they could not be used through a lack of trained personnel. Many "acute" beds — used for medical and surgical cases — were being blocked by elderly patients or the mentally ill because they could not be sent home due to a lack of care in the community.

In other cases the Government's drive to reduce waiting lists was distorting priorities, so that emergency patients had to wait on trolleys while non-urgent patients had operations in order to meet waiting list targets.

The BMA at its latest annual meeting heard a list of complaints from consultants and GPs, who called on the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, to take action "to rectify the severe and prolonged bed crisis in the acute sector".

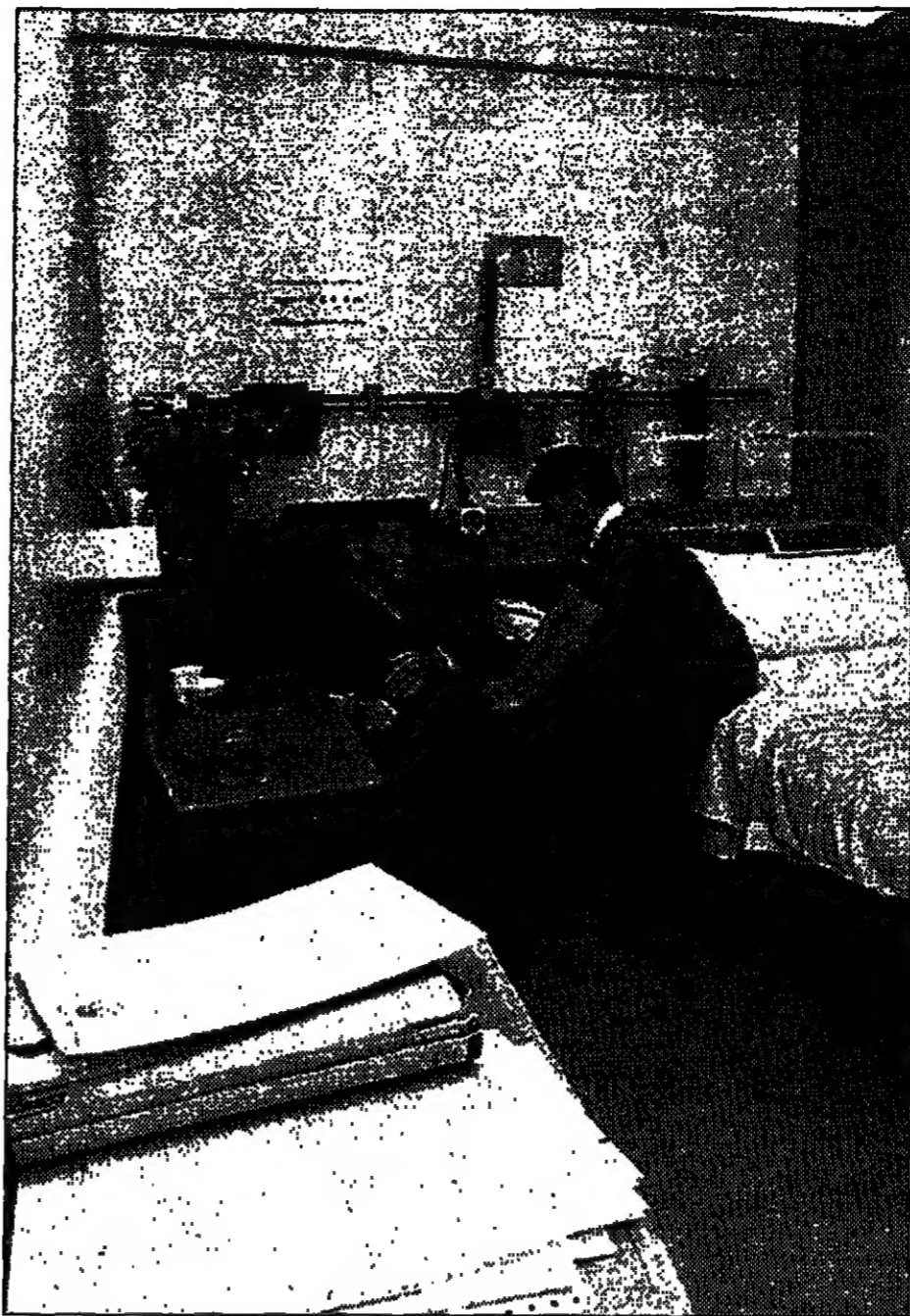
Admissions crisis

Scotland, Wales and many English cities have a beds shortage



The worst cases

- Edinburgh & Southern Scotland**
 - Three hospitals stopped non-emergency operations because of nurse shortages
 - Lothian Health Board reported 20% increase in emergency admissions on previous year
- Queen's University Hospital, Nottingham**
 - Funding problems closed wards and stopped non-emergency operations for three weeks
- South Wales**
 - A&E departments full or shut at four hospitals
 - One GP told no bed available in the whole of South Wales
- Whipps Cross Hospital, East London**
 - Ran out of trolleys one night in the Accident and Emergency Dept
- South West London**
 - 22% increase in admissions to A&E over last year
 - 26 patients on trolleys in one A&E department
 - Patients treated in ambulances at one hospital



Creaking under the strain of shortages, hospitals like St Heller have to keep non-emergency patients in casualty wards

'It's quite frightening. So much is happening. You are terrified you will miss something crucial.'

Edward Pilkington

TWO days before the new year, south London experienced heavy rain. That same day, partly as a result, St Heller hospital in Carshalton, Surrey, experienced a deluge. The rain froze, making roads and pavements treacherous. By early morning the hospital's casualty ward had begun to receive a stream of people who had slipped on the ice, spraining muscles and breaking bones.

The stream turned into a flood and, at its peak one day 88 patients arrived — much faster than the hospital could cope. The system ground to a halt. Before long, St Heller's casualty ward was full and there were no beds on other wards to which patients could be off-loaded. At the height of the crisis, several patients had to be left on trolleys.

Worse, others had to be left in the ambulances which had brought them to hospital because there was no room in casualty which, in turn, paralysed the ambulance service.

As congestion spread, about 30 people had to be left waiting in the cold where they had fallen on the pavement because all the local ambulances were out of action.

Nobody at St Heller would claim that December 30 — when 22 patients were seen — was an ordinary day. It was a freak occurrence which recurs perhaps once every five or six years.

But doctors, nurses and managers are concerned that it was a symptom of a serious underlying malaise. St Heller, a rambling white building, is one of the hospitals with the best resources in the region. Staffing levels are relatively high and a new, 60-bed ward has recently opened, bringing the total number of beds to 600.

Under such pressure, the hospital is having to improvise. Patients frequently spend two or three days in casualty beds as there is no room in general wards. Some even sleep overnight on trolleys. Currently, 13 patients are occupying beds on balconies and in rest rooms normally used for watching television. "I wouldn't call that unsafe, but it's certainly not satisfactory," Dr Maxwell said.

Robin Orchard, St Heller's medical director and a practising consultant, blames the shortage of beds on three factors: an ageing and increasingly frail population; a growing tendency for GPs to refer patients to hospital; and the trend for patients to spend longer in hospital before they are discharged.

It is this last factor that doctors find most frustrating, as the increased length of stay is largely due to non-medical reasons. In particular, the lack of outside support — either from social services or from families — often forces the hospital to care for patients longer than necessary.

"It's infuriating. We are spending vast amounts on keeping people as in-patients when they are perfectly fit to go home," Dr Orchard said.

During his ward round yesterday, Dr Maxwell examined 50 people. He estimated at least 20 had no medical grounds for being there — taking up beds that could be used by others. Staff are distressed to see the standards of care they provide being eroded by factors outside their control.

Suzan Thompson, a casualty sister, said that she feared making mistakes. "It's quite frightening at times. So much is happening at once — patients needing help, relatives demanding attention, agencies asking for information — that you are terrified you will miss something crucial."

St Heller's nurses and doctors are talking each day at a time. They hope the logjam will be cleared by better community support services — but thinking about the future is a privilege for which they rarely get the time.

Some patients were treated in ambulances. Mr Dorrell said there were enough beds, but they needed to be managed effectively. The fall in bed numbers over recent years had happened because modern medicine, with procedures such as day surgery, meant fewer beds were needed.

According to BMA figures, 9,000 acute beds have been closed in England over the past five years, and 31,000 since 1984. The total number of beds dropped from 325,000 in 1984 to 212,000 in 1994/95. Dr Macara said: "There is a shortage of staff because so many youngsters are fed up. There's a disastrous shortfall in community care — there's community neglect masquerading as community care. There are not enough resources."

Dr Macara said in the short-term money needed to be found to open more beds, but in the longer term a more fundamental review of bed needs was necessary.

Dr Macara said in the short-term money needed to be found to open more beds, but in the longer term a more fundamental review of bed needs was necessary.

£3bn bonanza for Woolwich savers

MORE than 3 million members of the Woolwich, one of Britain's oldest building societies, will take part in a £3 billion share bonanza next year, giving them a typical windfall of £1,000 each.

The society said catalytic change in the industry left it no alternative but to follow the Abbey National, Halifax, Leeds Permanent, Cheltenham & Gloucester and National & Provincial and abandon its mutual status. Mr Robinson said: "It may seem odd that most major societies are shedding their traditional status which has served them so well for more than 100 years. But a flat housing market combined with oversupply has reduced mortgages to commodities where price is everything."

The Alliance & Leicester is tipped to be the next to convert, but a spokesman said yesterday that it would not be rushed into a decision. Adrian Coles, director general of the Building Societies Association, strongly denied that the Woolwich's move signalled the end of building societies, even though fewer than 50 are expected to survive into the next century.

Mr Robinson said: "There will be building societies around for a very long time, and the Woolwich's decision will have no impact on the future of many strong mutuals such as the Nationwide, Derbys and Northern Rock." However, if the Alliance & Leicester follows the Woolwich, then building societies will account for less than a quarter of the mortgage market they once controlled.

Hope rises for deal on IRA arms

SENATOR George Mitchell, chairman of the international body on decommissioning IRA arms, left a 75-minute briefing session at Downing Street last night saying he remained hopeful of publishing his long-awaited report by next Thursday's deadline.

Downing Street, also in upbeat mood, said it had heard nothing from the US senator which could pose a problem, suggesting all sides may be edging towards an agreement on decommissioning, the issue that is delaying the start of all-party talks on the future of Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein disclosed on Wednesday that it was willing to countenance decommissioning IRA arms, so long as the IRA did the decommissioning itself, subject to independent verification. The proposal drew an initial warm welcome from the Ulster Unionists on Wednesday, but by yesterday morning the party's security spokesman, Ken Maginnis, had reverted to outright hostility.

Mr Mitchell, speaking outside Downing Street, said he had been told of Sinn Fein's proposals last month but refused to be drawn on whether he endorsed the idea. Describing his meeting with Mr Major, Mr Mitchell said: "We had a very good, productive, and informative discussion." He refused to be drawn on whether he supported an IRA start to decommissioning before the commencement of all-party talks, saying: "We are trying very hard to do something constructive in a complex and difficult situation."

Introduced to the Party by her friend Barbara Follett, Vivienne Westwood has set about breathing new life into New Labour, and her Spring "Stakeholder" collection is already catching on.

Bel Littlejohn page 9

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'Our analysis was not wrong . . . the view put about by malcontents as to why the Tories are in trouble is baloney'



No regrets . . . Lady Thatcher dismissed 'no nation' pro-European Conservatism and supported tax and spending cuts

PHOTOGRAPH: DON MAPIRE

Ex-premier says party is unpopular because the middle class, and those aspiring to join it, are no longer offered the incentives which they expect. Michael White on a keynote speech



Sharing the faith . . . in her speech Lady Thatcher praised by name four leading rightwingers - John Redwood, Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley and Michael Howard

Keep to the right, warns Thatcher

Blair dismissed as 'gut socialist'

LADY Thatcher last night coupled a vindication of her own political career as the woman who changed Britain irreversibly during the 1980s with an unmistakable warning to John Major to stick to Thatcherite fundamentals if he wants to prevent new Labour seizing power at the coming election. In her first domestic policy speech in Britain since leaving office five years ago, the former prime minister lambasted Tony Blair as an unrepentant socialist - "he is, as his record shows, by instinct a man of the left" - whose gut instincts were for state intervention. She was also careful to praise Mr Major by name along with gushing support for key rightwingers Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley, John Redwood and Michael Howard. But her passing reference to the Chancellor of the Exchequer - "I welcome his determination to bring public spending down below 40 per cent of GDP" - was coupled with no praise for any minister to the left of Mr Howard. It eloquently underlined the hostility Lady Thatcher feels towards the "One Nation" Toryism invoked by Major-

... cause it has moved to the right - and that this is what needs to be remedied - is baloney. "And Denis might be able to suggest a still more telling description," Lady Thatcher insisted. In unabashed terms which will delight her admirers and infuriate critics, she continued: "The test is simple. Just ask yourself: Is it because the Government has not spent, borrowed and taxed enough that people are discontented? Or is it because we have gone too far towards increasing government spending, borrowing and taxation?" According to Lady Thatcher, "the answer is obvious. We are unpopular above all because the middle classes, and all those who aspire to join the middle classes, feel that they no longer have the incentives and opportunities they expect from a Conservative government." What she calls malcontents, "socialists of all par-

... "What works here, as elsewhere, is free enterprise, and not big government. So it would make no economic sense at all for us to move closer to the policies of our opponents," she warned before tackling Mr Blair. Lady Thatcher said she would not impugn the Labour leader's motives. "But what about the party he leads? The Labour Party may have changed many of its policies, but it hasn't changed its spots. You can tell this from the unpleasant noises it makes when anything like profits are mentioned. "There is still virtually nothing that Labour spokesmen wouldn't spend more taxpayers' money on." As for Mr Blair, "all sorts of worthy people believe that Mr Blair in office would control his party, and not they him. But this would be a large gamble to take. Moreover, Mr Blair is not only human; he is also, as his record shows, by instinct a man of the left. Con-

fronted with the sort of choice you face in government, decisions which often go unmentioned in the manifestos, it is the prime minister's gut instincts which count." Having earlier described the job as that of "chief stoker" - keeping up the pressure - she continued: "The pressures to solve problems and assuage demands by more public spending, intervention and controls can become almost irresistible, even for an instinctive free marketeer. Mr Blair may believe in his head that government spending is not the universal panacea. But what about his heart, and indeed his gut?" Working towards her peroration, taken from her favourite Kipling poem, Lady Thatcher attacked Labour federalism as well as its devolution plans. "Suspicion that a Labour government would in practice become too soft a touch on public spending are compounded by all the misty talk about boosting communities and community values," she added. Replete with references to Picoles, Cicero and Erasmus, as well as more familiar heroes like Hayek, Cobden and Adam Smith, Lady Thatcher's lecture bore the imprint of hands other than her own. The names of speech-writer, Robin Harris, John Whittingdale MP, ex-side Charles Powell, and journalist Simon Heffer were being mentioned last night at Westminster.

Poetic reference to Runnymede omits mention of John's fate

John Ezzard

RUDYARD Kipling was not necessarily thinking of Lady Thatcher when he wrote in another poem, *Recessional*:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre.
But he would not have been deceived by her selective quotation of his slightly more doggerel *Runnymede*. In her onslaught on Euro-federalism, she quoted:
You mustn't sell, delay, dally
A freeman's right or liberty.
It wakes the stubborn Englishry,
We saw 'em roused at Runnymede!
And there they launched in solid line,
And still when Mob or Monarch loys
Too rude a hand on English ways,
That settled John at Runnymede!
There - exposed - may be the brute subtext of her lecture: King John's barons as the Tory right, seizing power from a prime minister who has never thought of the greensward of Runnymede as anything but a potential cricket pitch. Poetry, as Kipling could have warned her, is a medium designed to reveal the truth as well as expose the ridiculous.

The whisper wakes, the shudder plays,
Across the reeds at Runnymede,
And Thames, that knows the mood of kings
And crows and priests and suchlike things,
Rolls deep and dreadful as he brings
Their warning down from Runnymede!
However, she left out the even blunter - in her context - third verse:
When through our ranks the Barons came,
With little thought of praise or blame
But resolve to play the game,
They lumbered up to Runnymede!
And there they launched in solid line,
The first attack on Right Divine -
The cur, uncompromising Sign!
That settled John at Runnymede!



Kipling: selective quotes

'Eighties idol' snubbed as Redwood is invited to summit

Jonathan Freedland in Washington

JOHN Redwood is to join Newt Gingrich in a Washington summit of "revolutionary political leaders" from around the world. Mr Redwood will be the sole British representative at a January 22 forum convened

by the Progress and Freedom Foundation, a right-wing think-tank allied with the Republican House Speaker. The event will be the second Washington meeting between Mr Redwood and Mr Gingrich within a few months. "Their ideas are so similar," said Rick O'Donnell, a spokesman for the founda-

tion. "It's like how Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were ideologically close - so are Newt and Redwood." John Major has not been invited because organisers deemed him insufficiently radical. "He's not thinking dramatically about the 21st century," said Mr O'Donnell.

The foundation also declined to invite Mr Gingrich's ideological idol, Lady Thatcher. "She was the 1980s and Redwood, we believe, is the year 3000," said the spokesman. The meeting aims to chart a course for global conservatives, in the age of cyberspace and the "knowledge economy."

Opposition set to rescue divorce law shake-up

Rebecca Smithers Political Correspondent

THE unlikely saviour of the Government's plans to shake up the divorce laws appeared in the guise of the Opposition last night, as the shadow Lord Chancellor said he expected the majority of Labour peers to support the reforms.

Lord Irvine of Lairg was backing the new Family Law Bill as it entered its committee stage in the House of Lords, where it was subjected to a savage attack by Tory peers who fear it will undermine the status of marriage. His support of the reforms, which will end "quickie" divorces and introduce the concept of "no fault" divorce, was a subtle message that the Tory rightwingers opposing the legislation, in the Lords and the Commons, should not count on Labour's support. Lord Irvine, a close friend of Tony Blair and tipped to be

Lord Chancellor in a Labour administration, said the bill "does not in practice make divorce easier. On the contrary it strengthens marriage more than the present law." The rearguard campaign threatened against the bill in the Lords, led by Baroness Young, involves some 200 amendments, including one designed to sweep away the plan for "no fault" divorces by reintroducing adultery and unreasonable behaviour as grounds for divorce. Although the Government has imposed a two-line whip for the bill's committee stage in the Lords, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, has pledged that peers will be allowed a free vote on the more sensitive elements of the legislation. Among these are clause seven of the bill, which relates to the 12 months of "reflection and consideration" required before a divorce is granted. At the moment couples have to wait two

years, except in "quickie" divorces, but the Tory rebels have tabled an amendment proposing 18 months or two years. Government business managers yesterday moved swiftly to play down suggestions that Lord Mackay has bowed to pressure by being prepared to extend the minimum waiting time from 12 months to 18 months. In the Lords, Lord Mackay stressed: "As far as I am concerned, the position is that the Government's policy on the period remains at one year." But he made it clear that he would "listen carefully to all that is said in Parliament."

Lord Irvine criticised calls to extend the period for reflection to 18 months or more, saying this would merely exacerbate bitterness and hostility between the marriage partners and the trauma felt by children. Baroness Young told the Lords that marriage had to be buttressed.

Pilot schemes will smooth way to matrimony

THE Government is to fund pilot schemes to prepare couples for marriage in an attempt to stem the rising tide of divorces, *writes Chris Dyer*.

The announcement came as the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, faced fierce opposition last night from peers and bishops in the debate on his Family Law Bill, which removes the concept of fault from divorce. A spokeswoman for the Lord Chancellor said he was pledging hundreds of thousands of pounds to try out schemes designed to reduce the number and cost of marriage breakdowns. These would include marriage preparation projects and methods of encouraging couples whose mar-

Sea air fails to agree with Lancashire civil servants

David Hencks Westminster Correspondent

THE most sickness-prone civil servants evidently work at the Land Registry office in Lytham St Anne's, on the Lancashire coast. On average 15 days a year are lost by every member of staff there - double the number lost in the Land Registry's London offices and more than 50 per cent above national average level in the Civil Service.

leave over three years on 32 occasions. The auditors found that sick leave varied according to region, with Wales, the North-west and the North the worst areas. In addition to the Lytham St Anne's office, high sickness rates were recorded at Swansea, York and Birkenhead. The report concludes that the Land Registry has improved its record in handling sick leave over the past three years. It puts much of the blame for the big increase on the workload of the registry between 1988 and 1991. The improvement has been helped by new methods of working aimed at making the job less boring. Altogether five million working days every year are lost in Whitehall departments at an estimated salary cost of £419 million.

A National Audit Office report singles out the Land Registry, which handles property titles, as having the second worst record of sickness leave in government. It is just beaten by driving test examiners, who on average are double the national level. The report discloses a number of spectacular cases - one staff member had 302 days' sick leave over a six-year period in 81 spells of absence. Other cases included a person with 130 days' sick

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Blunkett stakes Labour's claim as 'one-nation' party

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

MARSHALLING all the individual talents of the nation to create social cohesion is at the core of Tony Blair's call for a stakeholder economy, the shadow education and employment secretary, David Blunkett, said yesterday in a speech designed to put further flesh on Labour's "big idea". Mr Blunkett sought to refute renewed Tory claims that Mr Blair's embrace of the stakeholder society, in a speech in Singapore on Monday, revealed that Labour intended to hand back power to the corporate institutions, notably the TUC. In a speech in Nottingham, Mr Blunkett made no reference to the unions, but instead argued that Mr Blair's speech showed that Labour

was the only one nation party - "One nation with higher education standards for every child, not just an elite few. One nation where welfare to work policies give everybody the opportunity to be self-reliant". He argued that Labour, unlike the Tories, recognised that "we either tackle the issue of social exclusion and a deeply divided society, or we preside over the disintegration of the fabric of community or society." "Social cohesion and a sense of identity and belonging are crucial in a society which is not only civilised but which works in the interests of all". Concern for social cohesion, in which everyone has a stake in the society, would be "of benefit to the individual and to society as a whole". But Labour's concern for social cohesion did not imply

that it underestimated the implications of information technology, globalisation or the changing nature of the labour market. Full employment, he argued, was only possible if Britain again became a competitive nation by investing in its workforce and offering new learning opportunities. "To achieve our goals, however, we need a quantum leap - firstly in the appreciation of the enormity of the problems facing us, and secondly in breaking down old thinking and outdated mechanisms for achieving our objectives." He called for an end to the bamboo curtains between government spending, so that the current sum spent on keeping people on the dole queue or in poverty was spent in educating the workforce. In particular, he praised local government initiatives, including one undertaken by

Leeds city council, designed to bring together employment, training and benefits agencies. He proposed that "education and employment zones" should be set up in areas of high unemployment, mirroring the experiments in specialist schools and colleges already established in areas of France and elsewhere in Europe, to end the threat of whole generations being excluded from the economic and social life of the nation. In the Commons, the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, ridiculed the stakeholder economy concept as a meaningless soundbite. The Liberal Democrats claimed that Labour had once again stolen one of its own key initiatives. The party pointed to its own Dahrendorf commission last year, which argued for a stakeholder society and an inclusive society.

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Princess sides with Labour on care policy

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

THE Princess of Wales created fresh political controversy yesterday when she appeared to side with two Labour MPs who attacked the Government's treatment of young people leaving care.

Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, sent the princess a copy of the Hansard report of a Commons debate in which he and a colleague, David Hinchliffe, MP for Wakefield, accused ministers of "cold cynicism" for cutting the "paltry" benefits payments made to impoverished young people.

Her private secretary, Patrick Jephson, replied that the princess's sentiments were "neatly summed up" by comments in the same debate by a third Labour MP, Frank Cook, and describing the speeches by Mr Flynn and Mr Hinchliffe as "astonishingly complete, compassionate and considerate".

Mr Jephson also wrote that the princess had asked him to thank Mr Flynn for taking the trouble to write and to send her "warm good wishes".

He added: "As you know, Her Royal Highness takes a keen interest in the subject of your speech, from which she

gained further valuable evidence of the difficulties faced by so many vulnerable young people.

Mr Flynn commented last night: "I am delighted to have the princess's support as it will help to bring attention to this neglected group of young people."

In his speech, Mr Hinchliffe attacked government proposals to introduce "boot camps" for young offenders.

"I become angry when I hear the latest proposals from the Home Office — the tough approach, going back to the short sharp shock treatment that was such a miserable failure," he said.

Tory MPs have already been angered by a recent speech by the princess in which she appeared to attack the Government's homelessness record. The latest episode will add to Tory qualms about granting her wish of a prominent diplomatic role abroad.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said the princess's secretary had simply sent the MP a polite acknowledgment without any intention of involving her in a political debate.

However, one Tory MP, Peter Luff, said the best way the princess could help young people was by doing "something more effective to keep her own family together".



Pole-bound... The team selected to walk to the magnetic North Pole carry their route map to the New North Pole pub in Kensington, west London, yesterday. They leave in April on the 350-mile charity walk from Resolute Bay in Canada, co-led by David Hempleman-Adams, the first Briton to walk solo and unsupported to the South Pole. PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

Hostage ploy in £5m post office raid

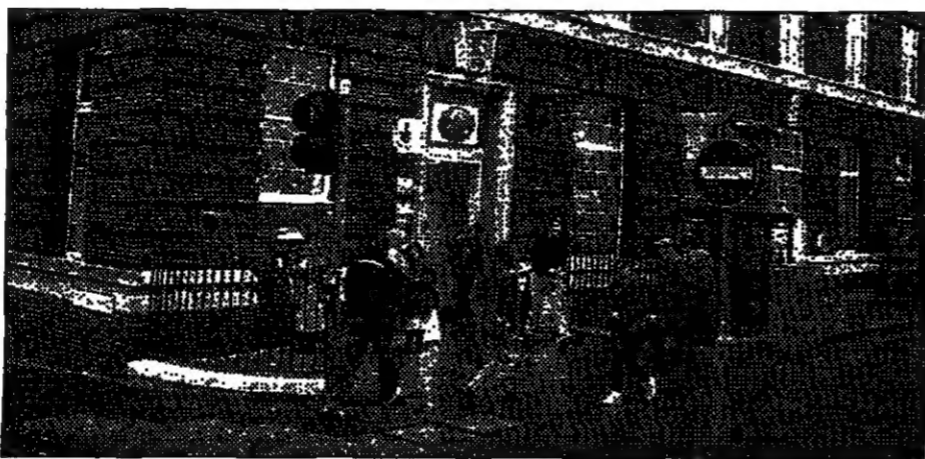
Armed gang frightens worker into opening door for robbery

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

ARMED robbers yesterday stole up to \$5 million by convincing a post office worker they had taken his wife and children hostage. Police were last night hunting a gang of four men armed with shotguns and a handgun.

The robbery began at 4.40pm on Wednesday when a counter staff worker on a break from the Cambridge Road post office in the centre of Hastings, East Sussex, was approached in the street by a man.

The worker was shown a photograph of his own wife and children and was told they had been taken hostage, and were being held by associates. He was told to co-oper-



The Hastings post office from where an armed gang stole \$5 million. PHOTOGRAPH: NIGEL BOWLES

ate with the robbery if he did not want them harmed. At 8.10pm, the worker, having unsuccessfully tried to contact his wife, admitted four balaclava-clad robbers to the post office. Two were armed with shotguns and a third with a handgun. Three members of staff were bound, and two of them with handcuffs. Money intended for pen-

sions and social security payments was then seized. It is believed up to \$5 million could have been taken. Hastings has a lot of pensioners, unemployed people and single parents.

The robbers left in a light-coloured Luton van after talking the staff that an associate still had the family held hostage. A member of staff man-

aged to raise the alarm and police arrived to find them all unharmed.

Police mounted an armed operation on the post office worker's home but the family were found safe and well and unaware of any attempt to contact them.

Detective Superintendent Paul Westwood of Sussex police said the post office

worker had been "understandably terrified" into co-operating with the robbers.

"The guns certainly looked real to the staff involved who were extremely frightened by what happened," he said.

The man who made the initial approach was described as aged between 30 and 35, about 5ft 11in to 6ft tall, stocky with short dark hair under a plain red baseball cap. He had a darkish complexion and was clean shaven. It is not clear if he was a member of the gang that carried out the actual raid.

One robber was described as being in his 30s, of stocky build and with ginger eyebrows. The robber carrying the handgun was said to be 5ft 8in tall, of medium build and wearing a black bomber jacket. He was wearing a pi-

lot's flying hat with flaps over the ears and a peak.

Police are anxious to trace the Luton van and any witnesses to the raid, which took place when many people were in the area. Security video cameras are being studied.

Armed robberies in the London area have fallen to a 10-year low, according to figures published yesterday. Last year, 597 armed robberies were recorded in the capital — a 12 per cent fall compared with the 1994 total of 679 offences — and well down on the 1985 total of 826.

Commander Roy Ramm, head of Scotland Yard's organised crime group, said the figures were a tribute to the efforts of his officers. "These crimes have been driven down by the sheer hard work and detective skills of Flying Squad officers," he said.

'Shambles' halts bypass work

Alex Bellon

THE leader of Newbury council yesterday described attempts to start building the town's bypass as "a shambles" after work was suspended for the third day in a row.

Keith Lock, a Liberal Democrat, called for more security guards and a heavier police presence to stop protesters from disrupting construction. Work was abandoned yesterday after two hours when 30 people put themselves in front of a digger.

Mr Lock said: "Something has got to be done. The whole operation has been pretty ineffective. The contractors may have to change their tactics. I think in the end police may have to take a stronger line."

He added that anger was growing in Newbury at the perceived incompetence of the road builders. After three days of work on the £200 million project, only about 50 of the 10,000 trees on the nine mile route have been uprooted.

Pressure is mounting on Blackwells, the site clearers contracted by the Highways Agency, as they are working on a two months' deadline — a European Union directive on bird habitats bans felling trees during the breeding season from mid-March to August.

The cat and mouse game between protesters and contractors shifted yesterday to the northern end of the bypass, where a digger moved in just before dawn. It was spotted about an hour later and by 5am protesters were arriving

in dribs and drabs. At least a dozen ran through a line of security guards, causing some injuries, and blocked the digger. At 9.45am work was suspended.

John Chapman of Mott MacDonald, the company supervising the digging, said: "We were able to work safely for a period of time. We have cleared a number of trees. It was a joint decision between the contractors and ourselves to stop in the interests of safety."

Protesters and legal observers are pleased, and a little surprised, by the largely peaceful nature of the demonstration so far.

Simon Festing, of Friends of the Earth, said: "We have been confrontational, but not violent. Most of the injuries have been accidents from people slipping."

This week's incidents have also marked a turning point in attitudes to security guards, and in particular, to those who have gone out of their way to appear impartial. "We are praising the police conduct," said Mr Festing.

But he added that he was expecting the battle to become fiercer in the weeks to come.

"Things have got to change. We are working on the strategy of being more pro-active, and I am sure the contractors will be adapting their tactics. There must be a time when they try a serious attempt to get going."

A spokesman for the Highways Agency said: "The contractor has been in position for not that long. He is still mobilising his troops. There is no loss of face."

Club 18-30 goes for the big tease

Michael Ellison on the new campaign by controversial holiday company

HOARDINGS were being plastered yesterday with advertisements aimed at appealing to the basest instincts of Britain's youth.

"Meet pleasant youngsters and chitter-chatter about popular music!" is the enticing prospect offered by one. "Jolly japes, sunny skies and friendly folk!" is the threat contained in another. A third insists: "Put on your trendiest clothes and dance to the disco beat!"

Club 18-30 seemed to have taken to heart the response to last year's campaign to inform people of a certain age and an "adventurous" disposition about its holiday offers.



Then, its posters showed a man in boxer shorts under the heading: Girls, Can We Interest You In A Package Holiday? The Advertising Standards Authority said it was "offensive and irresponsible" and banned the campaign. This time the firm and its advertising agency, Saatchi

& Saatchi, devised an apparently more anodyne approach.

But a line at the bottom of the new posters hints it has not lost its touch entirely. "For our real advertisements see Sky magazine, Loaded, Company and selected cinemas."

The February editions of Sky (readership: young, aged 18-30), Loaded (youngish lads) and Company (young, sex-obsessed, girls) reveal the true intentions of the £450,000 mission to inform.

One says: "Holiday forecast: Damp, followed by wet patches." The next goes for the cryptic approach with: "Gobbie, gobbie." Others say: "One swallow doesn't make a summer!" and: "Something deep inside her said she's come again."

Becky Impey, Club 18-30's marketing manager, said: "I think it's dead clever and it will appeal to our audience. The average age of our people is 22...

They're interested in entertainment, clothes and music. Our holidays are like a fortnight of Saturday nights and for lots of people that means drinking and meeting people of the opposite sex." The company sold 100,000 holidays last year, priced between £129 and £500.

Dominic Mills, editor of Campaign, the advertising industry magazine, said: "It's very difficult to get your message noticed and you either have to shout louder, which is what they probably did last year indiscriminately, or they use the posters as a tease, which is quite clever."

Graham Fowler, the standards authority's spokesman, said: "Their cheeky or sleazy innuendo is restricted to titles whose readers wouldn't be offended, but that's not to say they're acceptable. If the ASA receives a high body of complaints, we'll act to have them withdrawn."

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'Only passivity is dishonourable'

In the first of a series of reports focusing on the untold stories and hidden calamities of the war in the former Yugoslavia, **Ed Vulliamy** talks to retired French general Philippe Morillon, one-time United Nations commander in Sarajevo and of Nato's Rapid Reaction Force — a man who, as he says, left his heart in the destroyed safe haven of Srebrenica



ON THE very day that the peace treaty ending Bosnia's war was signed in Paris, last December 14, one of the more flamboyant characters to emerge from the carnage ended his own distinguished career as a soldier.

The figure of General Philippe Morillon had been etched into Bosnian history since his arrival in the enclave of Srebrenica, during the first bloody debacle in that town, which led to its subsequent, perverse designation as a "safe area" in spring 1993. He became an overnight hero: the main street was renamed in his honour.

The following July, Gen Morillon concluded his term as United Nations commander in Sarajevo with a lunch at his sandbagged residence, Richard and caviar were served, and in deep, De Gaulle-esque tones, Gen Morillon warned that only a decisive show of force from the West could forge a peace, otherwise Bosnia would become "a series of Gaza strips, ruled through fear". That show of force was still two more years away.

Today, speaking to the Guardian in his first important interview since retirement, Gen Morillon is harshly critical of the UN mandate in Bosnia which he dismisses as a "a mandate of angelism — an illusion that the mere presence of UN soldiers with blue helmets and the blue flag would help to prevent the explosion." His men's rules of engagement were "a farce".

Gen Morillon is by far the highest-ranking military commander to utter such views. And in the interview, he reveals his own efforts to carve a role for Nato through "strictly unofficial" contacts with alliance commanders.

Gen Morillon also describes for the first time his role as a guiding hand behind the deployment last summer of the Rapid Reaction Force, which, he confesses, he personally ordered to tear up its restrictive UN mandate and attack the Serbs — an escalation of the UN's military role that led directly to Nato intervention last autumn and the Dayton agreement.

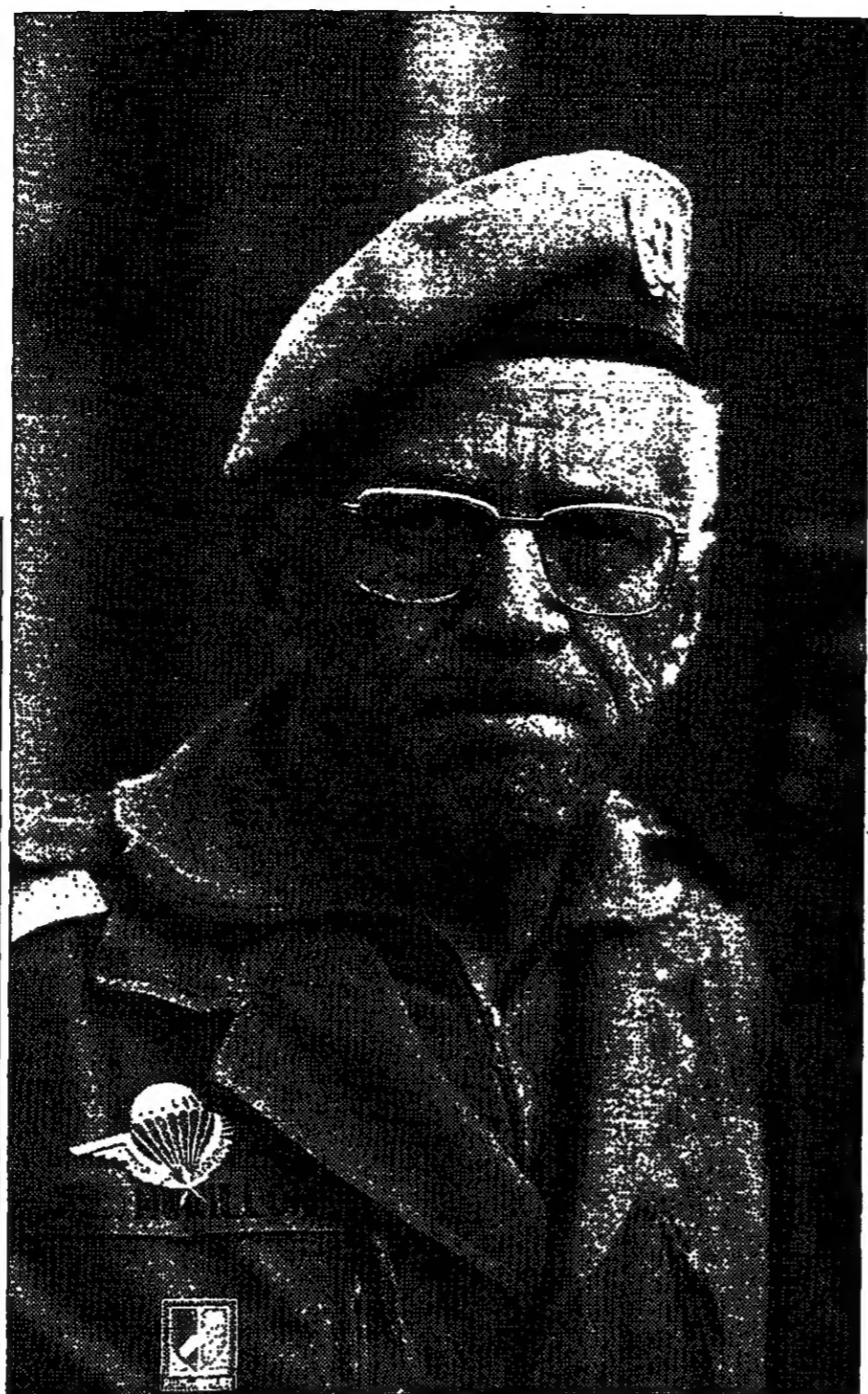
Gen Morillon also says that the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, confirmed to him at the time that the army of Serbia proper was fighting in Bosnia, in defiance of undertakings given to the international community.

Gen Morillon, a veteran of Algeria in the early 1960s, was a natural choice for a role in the UN's Balkan effort. He had spent two years with the Yugoslav army as an envoy from the French defence ministry, and knew many of its senior officers when it split into Croat, Bosnian and — mainly — Serbian columns.

In October 1991, Gen Morillon was included in a secret seminar held in Metz by senior officers from the armed forces of the Western European Union, gathered to consider options for Croatia. The two-week session's recommendation to the European Community and UN was for a "rapid reaction force", equipped with attack helicopters and tanks, and with a mandate to "assert its authority" and hold the ravaging of former Yugoslavia in check through military force.

Gen Morillon was an enthusiastic proponent of the report, but it was discarded and buried.

Instead, Gen Morillon found himself second-in-command to the Egyptian general Sadiq Nambiar at the UN Protection Force (Unprofor) headquarters in Sarajevo, chosen for its equidistance between Zagreb and Belgrade. Gen Morillon was convinced



Man of action... General Morillon's stand in defending Srebrenica won respect but was ultimately futile. Supporting players in the general's drama included (top to bottom) Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Colonel Bob Stewart, General George Joulwan

that "something totally different from traditional UN peacekeeping" was required.

When the Bosnian hurricane began to blow, the Sarajevo team was faced with a decision: either to evacuate or expand the mandate. "I said we must have a mandate for Bosnia... We were reacting blow by blow, without sufficient liaison with New York or the Community or even each other." The Unprofor HQ was moved from Sarajevo, Gen Morillon returned to the Bosnian capital in August 1992, with a mandate to open the airport and secure the humanitarian aid bridge to Split. He was among those

urging a broader brief to cover the whole of Bosnia. The outcome was, he says, "not so bad — deliver humanitarian aid while establishing the practical conditions for the (Vance-Owen) peace plan".

But, he says, "there was a confusion of aims, between two ideas: we had to be impartial, and I was impartial. But not neutral. They are not the same thing. My motto is 'only passivity is dishonourable' — the way I understood my mission was to oppose everything to do with ethnic cleansing. We could mediate, but we had to be resolutely opposed to the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. New York's understanding was the spirit of our mission, this illusion that we could remain passive."

Immediately, a rift opened between Gen Morillon's ambitions on the ground, and those of the UN "angelists" making policy in Zagreb and New York. The disagreement was fundamental, over who the "Protection Force" was in Bosnia to protect.

"The idea," says Gen Morillon, "that we were only there to protect ourselves, our soldiers, was unacceptable to me. This was the reason I had so many crises of anger — I was angry with people talking to me about the mandate all the time. We wanted nothing to do with the mandate, but with the spirit of our mission... which was to protect the population. To achieve that, we had to be able to use force against anyone denying or even questioning our freedom of action."

"It was my permanent intention to leave to use force. And that is the reason I was so angry when, after my departure, authorisation was given to every side to control our convoys. If you accept such control, you have no role to play, and should pull out."

The UN Security Council's

resolutions were, says Gen Morillon, "like the Koran — everything was there, including its contrary." But in terms of military authority, the mission was undersold.

From retirement, Gen Morillon lambasts the mandate's rules of engagement: "To limit our ability to fire only when fired upon was much too restricted," he says. "The idea of the right to legitimate defence was a farce."

Gen Morillon shared this view with the officer commanding the first British contingent to arrive in Bosnia, Colonel Bob Stewart, who promised: "I won't be forced off any road," and said he would regard any militia that interrupted the delivery of aid as "the enemy".

Such a position raised eyebrows in Whitehall, and at Zagreb command. Col Stewart



the town, but it was not what he regarded as the solution. "As far as I was concerned, it was a temporary expedient to protect the town until the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. For Srebrenica to become an Indian reservation for two-and-a-half years was absolutely not what I had in mind."

Gen Morillon had learned early on who his main adversary would be. Upon taking command in Sarajevo, he spawned a cunning scheme to break the siege: to establish Unprofor's headquarters in the Serb-held suburb of Ilidza. Ilidza, he says, "was the gateway to Sarajevo, key to the city. I did not want the airport, I wanted Ilidza."

It was here that the Serbs were later to erect roadblocks which closed the tarmac and route into the capital from Split, Mostar and the west, thereby tying the noose.

Gen Morillon tempted and flattered the Bosnian Serb president, Radovan Karadzic, with the idea of quartering Unprofor in a Serbian neigh-

bourhood, and convinced him. The mayor of Ilidza was delighted at the prospect of the hard currency following in Unprofor's slipstream. But the plan was quashed by the one man who saw through it: Gen Mladic.

"It was constant arm-wrestling with Mladic," says Gen Morillon. "I once told him to remember that Napoleon ended up on the isle of Elba. He laughed."

Such was Gen Mladic's authority, says Gen Morillon, that President Milosevic himself was a hostage to the Bosnian Serb general. "He was his prisoner, and remained so until the summer of 1995."

Gen Mladic enjoyed the loyalty of not just the Bosnian Serbs but the whole Serbian army, Gen Morillon says.

So the Serbian army was definitely fighting in Bosnia, for all Mr Milosevic's undertakings about the Drina blockade that would throttle his Bosnian Serb brothers?

"When I went to see Milosevic," says Gen Morillon, "I spoke to him about this. He was obliged to admit to me that they were involved; he couldn't deny that to me. The Serbian army was in there until May 1995."

This is the first testimony of a confession by President Milosevic that his own troops were so engaged.

By the time Gen Morillon left Sarajevo in 1993, he says, "I felt the threat of powerlessness" in the UN mission. He does not single out individuals for blame, but refers to "Zagreb" and "New York", the operation's political and diplomatic nerve-centres.

"There was conflict between Zagreb and Sarajevo," says Gen Morillon. "Relations with Zagreb were usually by phone, and from time to time there were angry crises. I repeated it every day: 'We have to be respected! If not, we have to withdraw.' I considered them functionaries; we were on the ground."

Zagreb, he adds, "was under the influence of 'angelism', 40 years of peacekeeping traditions. They were frightened, they would become involved in a disaster like Somalia. They were terrified of the UN being seen as partial, they failed to understand the difference between impartiality and neutrality."

The past summer, "the defining moment" of bombardment around Sarajevo was "exactly what I had been waiting for since the very beginning," says Gen Morillon.

The attack which finally forced the Serbs to the negotiating table was most famously mounted by Nato from the air. But the guns of the Anglo-French Rapid Reaction Force also unleashed vast quantities of ordnance against the Serbs. The RRF was engaged way beyond its

mandate, which was, strictly, to fire only in defence of UN personnel when endangered.

Back in Paris, Gen Morillon had lost patience. He had long argued for a Rapid Reaction Force and, once deployed, it was put under his command. And it was Gen Morillon who made sure the force's rules of engagement were broken.

"When the force was sent," he recalls, "a statement was made that the mission was solely to protect our own soldiers. I was so angry, I shouted: 'If this is what they are there for, then withdraw them!'"

The French general André Soubirou was commander of the force in the field. "I received Soubirou in my office," says Gen Morillon, "and I told him: 'don't be concerned about the rules of engagement. You have to establish the tactical advantage, and use it. Say to your opponent, see that helicopter? See that tank? See that battery? Now shoot me if you dare! That was what I did in my way at Srebrenica, and that

'It was constant arm-wrestling with Mladic. I once told him to remember that Napoleon ended up on the isle of Elba. He laughed'

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To get enough armoured vehicles 'I had to wait for the assassination of Bosnia's deputy prime minister while he was escorted by my men'

was considered wild and rash — but, says Gen Morillon, "Stewart was right. I tried to back him all the way." Gen Morillon also pays tribute to the soldiers of the next British regiment in, the Prince of Wales's Own Yorkshire, for opening fire on a Croat position, killing at least four, after the ambush of a convoy bound for Tuzla in early 1993.

"It was the first battle, and the right battle. I knew that it was a sign of our authority." The French in Sarajevo took the greatest number of casualties among the UN contingents. Gen Morillon blames not only the rules of engagement, but a lack of adequate protection.

Gen Morillon says it took

promised the people he would stay among them until their security was guaranteed. He now knows he was actually a hostage of the Bosnian government, that an order was sent from Sarajevo to ensure he remained in the enclave.

"I tried to escape at night," he says, "but it was the sight of hundreds of people, women and old people and children, coming in through the snow that night from the places that had fallen, that made me realise I had no choice but to stay."

The outcome was the first "safe area", bloodily overrun, with thousands murdered, in July 1994. The safe area was what Gen Morillon required of himself in order to leave

World news in brief

Papandreou 'may resign' after summoning president

GREECE'S critically ill prime minister, Andreas Papandreou, has asked through the government spokesman to meet the president, leading to speculation that he may agree to step down, writes Helena Smith in Athens.

It was a surprise even to Mr Papandreou's own socialist party when the spokesman announced yesterday that the ailing leader, who has been in intensive care since November 20, had summoned President Costis Stephanopoulos to his bedside. Officials said the

meeting would probably take place this weekend. The government had earlier survived a vote of confidence tabled by the opposition, which said the prime minister's prolonged illness had left the country leaderless.

Under Greek law, Mr Papandreou, aged 76, who has been attached to life support machines, can only be replaced if he resigns. Expected to give the prime minister physiotherapy and speech classes, said yesterday his health was improving.

Peru jails US woman for life

A Peruvian military court yesterday sentenced an American woman to life imprisonment for aiding Marxist guerrillas, her lawyer said.

Grimaldo Achab said Lori Helene Berenson, aged 26, from New York was convicted of treason for assisting the pro-Cuban Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. — Reuter.

Charges imminent

The prosecution in a Spanish supreme court inquiry into allegations that the former interior minister, Jose Barrionuevo, backed a "dirty war" against Basque separatists

yesterday asked for bail — apparent confirmation that he will be formally charged, writes Adela Gooch in Madrid.

Italian PM 'quits'

The Italian prime minister, Lamberto Dini, announced his resignation yesterday, opening the way for parliament to choose between a snap general election or a new government to enact key reforms. — Reuter.

Massacre arrests

Four Mexican state officials and 17 policemen have been arrested on suspicion of involvement in the June 26 massacre of 17 unarmed peasants in Guerrero state, writes Phil Gunson in Mexico City. Ten

other members of the state police are already in jail.

Journalist bailed

Paul Adams, the Financial Times correspondent detained by in Nigeria for a week, has been freed on bail, diplomats said. Mr Adams was arrested in Ogoniland and charged with possessing seditious material. — Reuter.

Cousteau farewell

Jacques-Yves Cousteau's ocean research ship the Calypso, in which the French oceanographer, aged 85, has toured the world since 1950, has sunk in shallow waters off Singapore, a spokeswoman for the port authority said yesterday. — Reuter.

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The Wolf, the Bear, and the hostages in between

SALMAN RADUYEV'S eyes twinkled with good humour, unshakable confidence in the righteousness of his deeds on earth, and absolute certainty of a martyr's honour, if need be, in heaven.

The Chechen rebel leader known as the Lone Wolf, whose motley band of fighters is holding the night of an outraged Russia at bay, came to the village of the little house he has commandeered in this village like a proud local celebrity delighted by the attention and feeling himself worthy of it. Two small children played nearby.

Though some of the fighters around him wore black masks, his face was adorned only by his long red beard and his black woolly hat wrapped in the Arabic words: "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

A few yards away lay a reminder that Mr Raduyev is bargaining with Russia for his life, the lives of his 150 fighters and the lives of as many as 160 hostages. Covered in velvet cloth were the bodies of three of his men, killed in the fighting in the Dagestani town of Kizlyar. Tuesday when his band seized the hospital and 2,000 captives.

"If Russia does not want a peaceful outcome, we are ready," he said. "We are soldiers. We do not care how we die."

President Boris Yeltsin, in Paris for the memorial service for Francois Mitterrand, made a conciliatory gesture, saying: "As soon as they agree to not using weapons we will withdraw our troops. Only the police will remain to maintain public order."



'We are soldiers. We do not care how we die'

James Meek meets the Chechen 'Lone Wolf' (left) holding hostages as Russian troops surround the village of Pervomayskaya

Russian helicopters brushing with guns and rockets clattered low over the village as Mr Raduyev spoke.

In the snow-covered fields beyond, Russian armoured troop carriers dipped and reared in and out of irrigation ditches as they struggled for vantage points before darkness fell.

Yet even yesterday afternoon it was possible to walk unchallenged into Pervomayskaya along an open road.

Mr Raduyev, son-in-law of the Chechen separatist leader General Dzhokhar Dudayev, said his group had originally planned to attack the military airfield in Kizlyar, because they believed a large consignment of artillery rockets for use in Chechnya was to be unloaded there.

The hostages were taken on Wednesday morning after reaching, as they claimed, a deal guaranteeing them safe passage to Chechnya, after which they would release the rest.

But according to Mr Raduyev the convoy of buses carrying them and their hostages, including an unspecified number of women and children, was fired on with rockets from a Russian helicopter just as it was leaving Pervomayskaya, only a few hundred yards from the Chechen border.

The Chechens ordered the convoy to turn back and they quickly took over the village, capturing 37 interior ministry soldiers and an arsenal of weapons. Most of the 500 or so villagers fled.

The hostages have been dispersed among the village houses, making a successful attempt to free them by force virtually impossible.

Polish PM and the KGB man 'just good friends'

Matthew Brzezinski in Warsaw

HIS Soviet "minders" reportedly gave him the code name Olin and beamed like proud parents as their prize mole rose steadily to prominence and power in the Polish government. They whooped with joy after his promotion to one of the highest posts in the land. Then last July in Majorca, disaster struck.

The holidaying former KGB colonel, Vladimir Alganov, apparently opened the door of his hotel suite to find himself face to face with the Russian, a diplomat in Warsaw for more than 10 years and now manager of a business there, of "running" the mole.

All this is the former KGB man's version, however. Mr Zacharski, still reportedly a member of the Polish secret service, has said nothing.

There was no hint of Olin's identity until three days before Lech Walesa relinquished the presidency to the reformed communist Aleksander Kwasniewski on December 23.

A stunned parliament was told that Moscow's man was none other than President Kwasniewski's long-time party colleague — the prime minister. Poland has still not recovered from the shock.

"Prime minister Jozef Oleksy knowingly conveyed information and documents, some classified, to foreign intelligence officers," said Andrzej Milczanowski, minister of internal affairs, a Walesa ally. "The activities dated from 1982 through to 1985."

Mr Oleksy has been prime minister since 1989, leading a coalition of reformed communists and peasants.

The Russians screamed that he had been framed. Mr Oleksy screamed even louder, accusing Walesa loyalists of "dirty provocations" and seeking to revenge his poll defeat.

Colonel Alganov materialised at a hastily convened press conference in Moscow, where he said that he knew Mr Oleksy, but they were just "good friends". No sensitive matters had been raised during their hunting trips together, he added.

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Russia's newly appointed spy-master, General Vyacheslav Trubnikov, also suddenly felt the urge to talk to the media. The affair was a provocation and the allegations were unsubstantiated, he told a Polish journalist.

No proof of the charges has yet been made public. Yesterday, Poland's counter-intelligence service turned over crucial evidence, apparently including incriminating audio and videotapes, to military prosecutors, who will decide next week whether a case should be made against the prime minister, who is on holiday.

President Kwasniewski yesterday declared his embattled prime minister, citing a Paris press conference he had full confidence in him. "I have no reason not to have confidence in him."

The country has been plunged into a frenzy of conspiracy theories. Many are convinced of Mr Oleksy's guilt, but some say Mr Walesa is framing him. Others claim the Russians fabricated the scandal to discredit and derail Poland's entry into Nato.

Another theory is that the CIA is behind the affair. Meanwhile, the truth could get fuzziest because the secret service is in chaos.

Wholesale changes in the service and the ministry it reports to have been made recently, with Mr Oleksy making key appointments.

Last week, the counter-intelligence chief quit, accusing the prime minister of a cover-up.

His main task is to prepare the LDP and government for a new election under more democratic and "clean" rules.

His first task will be to solve the problem of the junior, housing loan companies which are on the verge of bankruptcy, with potential bad debts of 10,000 billion yen (262 billion). Unless he can mop up their bad debts, Japan's economic growth will be threatened.

Mr Hashimoto, the fourth prime minister in the two and a half years since the last general election, won his international spurs last year in tough talks with the United States on car imports.

His main task is to prepare the LDP and government for a new election under more democratic and "clean" rules.

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Armed to the teeth... Chechen fighters check their weapons as they prepare to make a stand in the village of Pervomayskaya in Dagestan

US digs up its fortress Europe

Restor in Gainesville, Florida

A RCHAEOLOGISTS in Florida believe they have found a fort which protected the first successful European colony in the territory of the future United States.

A triangular moat, burned timbers, pottery and musket shot were found in 1994 in the grounds of an old Spanish mission in St Augustine, Florida.

Kathleen Deagan, of the University of Florida, said researchers were confident the finds came from an early fort of Pedro Menéndez de Aviles, who established the colony of St Augustine, the oldest US city, in 1565. The fort was later burned down.

"It's an exciting discovery for us because it's the earliest European site within the first European town in the US," she said.

Researchers hope the ruins will yield clues to why the settlement survived when many other fledgling colonies failed.

"My personal speculation is that the people of St Augustine... used a lot of American Indian materials," Ms Deagan said.

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Who'd have thought it — a Brit awards that isn't clogged up with Elton 'n' Rod and recognises there is room for improvement...
 Caroline Sullivan

Review page 8

tant arm-wrestling. I once told him to that Napoleon ended of Elba. He laughed

Journalist hailed
Coutreau favored

Watch out, she's back

Lady Thatcher means trouble for the Tories

SHE just won't lie down, will she? Or perhaps it is simply truer to say that she can't. Former PMs are normally supposed to know their place in the appointed scheme of things. Not this one. Convention demands that they are only wheeled out on special formal occasions. But Lady Thatcher still craves the bear-pit and compulsively demands star billing when she returns. She can't leave her legacy to be judged by others, as an ex-premier like Lord Callaghan can. Her legacy is too important for that, and not just in her own laser-firing eyes. Try as she may, Lady Thatcher still finds it impossible not to judge everyone and everything against her own achievements — or rather against the highly selective version of them that in her role as the party's first Mrs Rochester she has now come to believe. And the truth is, so does much of the rest of the Conservative Party — and some outside it too.

The Tory party is still grappling with Thatcherism and Lady Thatcher made it clear last night that she is prepared to go the full fifteen rounds in defence of her title. Her Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture was like a potted version of the much purchased, little read memoirs of last year — and like the memoirs it betrayed the evidence of many hands. It was part *apologia pro vita sua*, part ultimatum to the next generation of Tories. There were moments of pure surrealism, like the bid to outcroon Dame Vera Lynn, as well as the bursts of egomania invoking a terrifying thing she called Thatcher's Law. There were also many late additions, each one evidence of the fear which this event induced in the party high command. The speech bore the hallmarks of a virtuous but not whole-hearted attempt to be even-handed to the party's current leaders; doubtless many arms had been twisted over many days. But the praise for John Major was unmistakably per-

functory and sneering, while the accolade for Michael Portillo's appalling party conference speech was gratuitous and in the circumstances highly provocative. And where, to go with the pats on the back for Messrs Clarke, Howard and Redwood, was the compliment for the First Secretary of State and Deputy Prime Minister? Clearly there are some things that you can never ask some girls to do.

At bottom, however, this was a call to continue the revolution and therefore a rebuke to those who have betrayed it. It attacked Labour, as Central Office had pleaded over many days that it should, and its lip-curling contempt for "misty talk about boosting communities and community values" was vintage stuff. But the attempts to depict Tony Blair as a man of the Old Left rang hollow. For wasn't there in fact a note of sneaking admiration for the young Labour leader? Wasn't there a sense that here — by contrast with the leader of her own party — is a politician who accepts, see the Daily Telegraph yesterday morning, the importance of the Thatcher legacy? The real target of this speech, intended or not, was John Major. The most trenchant and vernacular passages were those in which she blasted her once and future real enemies in the Tory party. The heart of the speech was a shameless reassertion of the values of the 1980s, of yuppie culture, tax cuts, mortgage interest relief, privatisation and reduced public spending, larded with the Kiplingian anti-Europeanism which has become her stock-in-trade since leaving office. Doubtless she meant all this to be supportive. But pointing out the error of your successor's ways can have only one effect, and she knows it. It was a reactionary, self-indulgent, selective speech, and in the present state of Conservative Party politics it can be nothing except destructive. Hooray.

A partial answer to the impasse

Sinn Fein's suggestion deserves a positive response

NORTHERN Ireland's long political impasse has been caused by two things: the British government's insistence on the handover of some IRA arms before all-party talks can begin, and the IRA's refusal to countenance any such thing, however it might be disguised. In a peace process which is supposed to be about talking and negotiating, the combined effect has been to prevent the very things which would best secure and extend the peace and which most people of goodwill both in Britain and Ireland want to see. The impasse is doing no one any good, as the recent increase in tension and violence shows. Sinn Fein's suggestion this week of a possible compromise, under which paramilitary weapons would be destroyed by the groups themselves under independent supervision as part of an overall peace settlement, is therefore a very significant development. It is not a total answer to the impasse, but it unquestionably moves the situation forward from the place where it had become stuck. It is a recognition that republicans must move on arms. It therefore casts doubt on the intransigent content of Sinn Fein's increasingly turgid position as it has been repeatedly set out over the last few months. And it deserves a positive response.

Sinn Fein's long submission was made to the International Body on Decommissioning, led by former US Senator George Mitchell, whose team was in Downing Street yesterday and in Dublin today. It is certainly not everything

that London has been demanding. In particular it offers no hope of even a gesture on arms decommissioning in advance of all-party talks — the so-called "Washington Three" condition on which Britain still insists. It also, as the Democratic Unionists have pointed out, keeps in play Sinn Fein's demagogically indefensible equation of legitimate (i.e. army and police) arms and illegal, paramilitary weapons.

Nevertheless it needs to be taken seriously, and Downing Street's low-key but positive reaction is an encouraging indication that this is now happening. By contrast, the Ulster Unionists' cautiously interested initial response on Wednesday was better than yesterday's more negative second thoughts. The great criticism of Sinn Fein in recent months is that since the ceasefire of 1994 they have made no constructive contribution to a process which necessarily involves creative compromise on all sides. Now, at last, they have shuffled the pack a little, and in so doing have created some space in which others can and should respond. It is not the breakthrough, but it makes the breakthrough possible. It is no longer legitimate for those who are instinctively reluctant to talk to the IRA to remain stuck in their old positions. Crucially, Sinn Fein have given Senator Mitchell and his colleagues some options to get everyone off the hook. That was what the impasse required and that is what this week's discussions are all about.

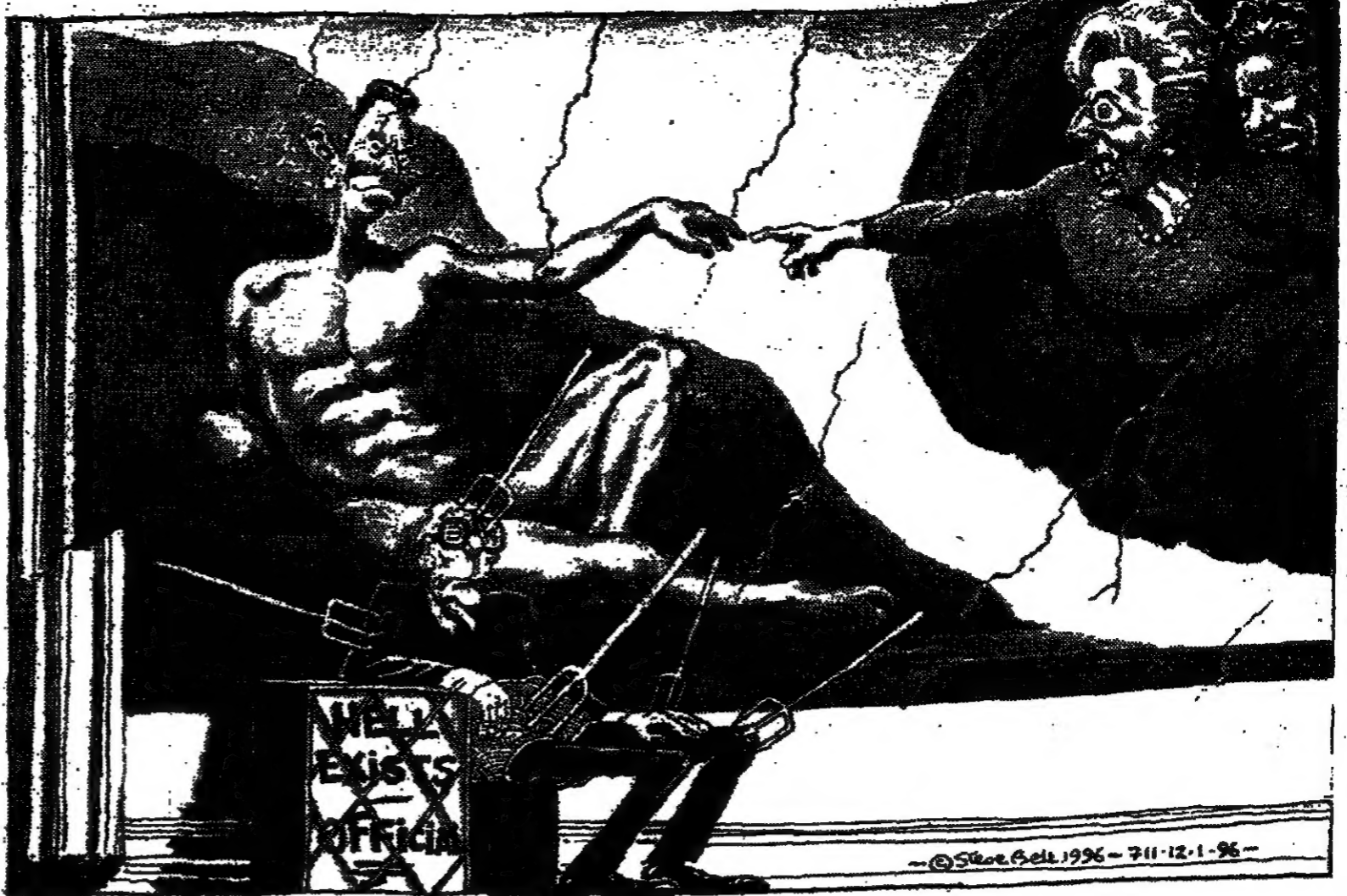
Blowing hot and cold over hell

Damnation, the final judgment is tormenting our minds again

THE DEVIL always has the best lines which is why a few cautious sentences in a new Church of England report have conjured up some fiery headlines. The report tackles the meaning of salvation in the modern world at a time when society has become much more pluralist and much less religious. How does it relate to such issues as the environment, discrimination and human rights? The Doctrine Commission has some good ideas but the report is not exactly an easy read. Page 198 comes as media manna, so to speak, from heaven. Here while rejecting the traditional hell with all its fiery trimmings it concludes that there is still a final judgment. As with most eschatology the argument is not all that clear. But the point seems to be that those who reject the force of love and friendship condemn themselves to a state of non-being which amounts to hell. So, "we believe in Hell," says the Church.

"The argument suits our present times. Hell is a familiar metaphor for cutting oneself off from all that should be valued in life. When we hope that Radovan Karadzic will rot in hell, we mean that he should be unable to live with his own conscience. When we say that war is hell, we are rejecting the notion that there is anything good or life-enhancing about it.

Hades was originally a neutral concept till Judaeo-Christianity built on Zoroastrian doctrine to separate the flock into the chosen and the rejected. It then became an extremely hot place with flames, torments and toasting-forks. In Germanic myth, interestingly, it was an extremely cold place where Queen Hel ruled in a palace called Sleetcold. Now hell has been translated back into our own minds where it really belongs. There — as Milton told us long ago — we can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.



Letters to the Editor

Gulf between allies and truth

ONE of the saddest truths of the Gulf war (Leader, January 11) is that the media industry has only just got round to realising there are truths still to be told. In March 1991 I filmed Edward Pearce, Paul Foot, John Pilger and Victoria Brittain passionately exposing the horrific truth behind the "official lies" you consider necessary. We knew even then that Iraq troops were being 'Napalimed' and buried alive and that civilians and school infrastructure were being hit by a large proportion of the 98 per cent of bombs that weren't smart — but these, and a few other honourable exceptions, remained on the fringe.

Between 1991 and 1994 I worked on four films revealing the hidden casualties of the conflict — from malnourished babies in Iraq to tortured and exiled minorities in Kuwait and the Gulf War Syndrome in the US and the UK. There are 70,000 Gulf war veterans registered as sick in the US alone and yet programmes like the BBC series still paint the "no casualty" picture. Five years on, the lessons of the Gulf war appear to be, sadly, that the mainstream media still only reveal what official sources want them to reveal when they want it revealed.

Michael Dixon,
94 Wardour Street,
London W1V 3LP.

[WAS shocked to hear the truth about the dismal performance of the Patriot missile system against Iraqi Scuds. The original newsreels gave an impression of almost 100 per cent success — are there no advertising standards in this country any more?]

Graham Mort,
The Beeches,
Riverside, Clapham,
via Lancaster LA2 8DT.

Parish news

THE loss of an odd bishop's palace (Leader, January 11), here or there, will make little impact on the Church of England's financial difficulties. What might be more significant, given the inevitable and continued reduction in stipendiary ordained ministers, would be a proportional reduction in the number of dioceses, diocesan bishops and diocesan administrations. This would minimise the risk of the Church being management too-heavy, and might liberate it to its pastoral and prophetic task. (Rev) David Jennings, Rector, Burbage with Aston Farnville, The Rectory, New Road, Burbage, Hinckley, Leics LE10 2AW.

I AM a tenant of the Church Commissioners and have been recently informed by them that they wish to raise my rent by 25 per cent. It will be reassuring to the Bishop of Portsmouth to know that so many more of us will, along with him, help to recoup the Church's property losses. Noel Hanson, 14 Ebury House, Farringdon Road, London SW8.

I'M sick of hearing bishops decrying the Lottery. The old "theological" objection to gambling, that it gave something for nothing, seems to have been, rightly, abandoned. All these po-faced clerics can find to object to is the size of the jackpot. I'm all for good stewardship of money — and doesn't the Church of England, at least have something to learn about that? But where's the harm in a flutter? Visions and dreams are not alien to Christianity or to life. (Rev) John W McC Miller, 9 Nutbatch Drive, Earley, Reading, Berks RG6 5DP.

A market comprehensively bucked

ONE argument for introducing selection into secondary education is that it is the only way to keep the middle class in the state sector, and happy to pay their taxes for so doing (Playing to win, January 10). It is not, however, legitimate to argue that somehow selection of pupils will produce a world where everyone gets a better education. Stephen Pollard wants a market system where schools compete amongst themselves and he claims that the power of consumers to choose will lead to the best outcome all round.

While the market is the best way of providing retail services, one must not forget that the poor often end up having to buy from the local, high-price shop while the better-off drive to the spacious, well-filled aisles of Sainsbury's. In a marketised schools system, who will take the less able children? The idea of progressive vouchers, suggested by some as a way through the equity issue, is filled with dangers, not least that it would be politically impossible to give the middle class lower-value vouchers than the poor.

Second, many of the factors that make markets work do not exist in education. Information is inherently very

poor and transactions costs (eg as a result of changing schools) are high, making the exercise of choice very difficult.

It is for these reasons that even the market-orientated OECD, in its 1995 report on the UK, was decidedly lukewarm as to whether the introduction of market-like processes into education by the Conservatives is sensible. Dan Corry, Institute for Public Policy Research, 30-32 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7RA.

TO ASSUME that 4,000 comprehensive schools simply do not educate our children properly, whereas the grammar schools which they destroyed did, is simply not true. Pollard should remember why so many parents — middle-class and Conservative ones too — welcomed the shift from a secondary-modern system for the majority to a comprehensive system for all.

First, the basis of dividing children at 11 — into the relatively few who were capable of academic work and the many who were not — was demonstrably mistaken. For instance the results of tests which claimed to establish innate intelligence were shown to be profoundly influenced

by the "coaching for tests" which some parents but not others were able to pay for.

Second, however, the very concept of two kinds of educational species simply did not make sense. There are many kinds of talent and many ways in which intelligence might be developed. Only a comprehensive system could get rid of the simplistic division of children into the intelligent few and the rest, and could show respect for the range of talent and quality that is required in a modern and educated society.

(Prof) Richard Pring, University of Oxford, Dept of Educational Studies, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY.

POLLARD says that schools should be allowed to admit 15 per cent of pupils who excel at music, but his claim that only "specialist bias" can give schools a clear-cut focus, an ambitious curriculum and a strong educational leadership is nonsense. You don't achieve excellence by concentrating on a specialist 15 per cent.

Pollard says you can't combine mixed ability and setting but we did it in the sixties when I taught in my grammar schools and we do it now in comprehensive schools. He is

fighting the battle of the 1960s. However, comprehensive schools now have control over their own budgets, a state-controlled curriculum, are effectively monitored and work in a target-conscious culture. The state publishes league tables and they show steady improvement. A transformation has taken place and Pollard hasn't noticed.

Mike Brindle, 6 Nunsey Drive, Theford, Norfolk IP24 3EN.

AS A teacher, I would like to know what plans Pollard has for the 75 per cent not selected. Popular support was given to comprehensives originally because parents no longer were faced with the fact that in four cases out of five, their offspring would be classed as having failed.

Thirty years ago these disappointed parents accepted these often arbitrary decisions because there were apprenticeship schemes for their less academically gifted boys and marriage for their girls. I am sure such acceptance today would not be complete. Please, let us move forwards, not backwards. John Carrick, 84 Cherry Tree Avenue, Cowplain, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO8 8AY.



Kids under remote control

WHEN my children were babies and preschoolers I always worked full-time. So I'm well aware that most babysitters and childminders use television as a constant source of entertainment and background noise, which damages children's speech (TV exposure damages child speech, January 10).

There's only one surefire way of preventing this, short of throwing the set away. We locked it in a bedroom and simply never said we had one. It's a minor inconvenience to confine your viewing to a bedroom; but when set against the risk to children's verbal abilities, it's more than worth it.

Oh, and I've always confined all viewing to an hour after school and on weekends. Today my son and daughter, aged 11 and six, have extensive vocabularies, interest in reading — and rarely shut up. Gloria McStane, 39 Newbiggin, Richmond, North Yorks DL10 4DX.

Union broadcasts a warning

YOU report that the BBC's Arabic television service was censored by the Saudi-owned relay station in Rome (Major adds to Saudi turmoil, January 8). If the Government's plans are successful the whole of BBC Transmission, both Domestic and World Service, will soon be privatised. All the BBC's output, not just uncomfortable news about Saudi dissidents, could be subject to both overt and covert censorship if BBC Transmission is sold into the private sector. Up to now, most eyes have been on Rupert Murdoch's ambitions, either through his satellite channels or his almost complete control over the decod-

ing technology for domestic viewers.

All British broadcasting now should take note. Virginia Bottomley is in danger of giving control of all transmission to organisations which do not share even her government's somewhat threadbare values of free speech. Brian Marsh, BECTU, 111 Wardour Street, London W1V 4AY.

Please include a full postal address, even on e-mailed letters, and a telephone number. We may edit letters; shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret we cannot acknowledge those not used.

Born free but in chains

PREVENTING escapes is the Home Secretary's paramount concern for prisoners (The shame I felt in chains, January 11). No one must ever be allowed to abscond again, no matter what the financial or human costs. It would simply be too politically embarrassing.

There were no ministerial statements last year when two 16-year-old boys hanged themselves in prisons. Surely resignations should be forthcoming over policy failures which lead to two young teenagers dying?

The manacles should come off the women, who have a right to decent maternity care, privacy and dignity. Shackling a woman at any time causes stress to her baby, to herself and to other patients. The treatment of women prisoners is a symptom of a malignant policy running deep into the penal system. Frances Crook, Director, Howard League for Penal Reform, 706 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

WHEN I visited my daughter and granddaughter on the post-natal ward at the Whittington Hospital on August 9 last year, the bed opposite was occupied by an inmate of Holloway Prison. She was chained by the ankle to a male prison officer. On enquiring about this brutal practice we were told that it was on Home Office orders. Patricia Milling, The Old Rectory, Shirenewton, Gwent.

TO HOLD one's own newborn child in one's arms is probably the most joyful event in one's life. To spoil this with shackles is appalling. Apart from discomfort, pain, exhaustion, possibly stitches and some haemorrhage, no woman will run off and abandon her baby. If this had happened in any other country, we would be the first to condemn it. Judy Naylor, Westley Bank, Bolton, Apptley, Cumbria CA16 6AF.

A Country Diary

SOUTH WALES: The rendezvous smacked of the early novels of John le Carré. No passwords crossed our lips but at 7.40am on Christmas Eve on a slip road off the M4 just below Chepstow, a Renault 19 drew up beside me. "Follow me," said a voice from the passenger side window. So I did, and we wended our way in the half light before dawn to the shoulders of the Gray Hill, a bracken-covered mountain nine miles to the west of Chepstow. There we left the cars and climbed towards the peak of the Gray Hill. We were trying, unsuccessfully as it turned out, to observe the midwinter sunrise along a historically determined alignment in which a series of Bronze Age standing stones point to a notch on the horizon 23 miles away to the east. And if clear conditions prevail on or about the winter solstice the rising sun would have come up over the horizon in that distant notch. But at 8.13am — sunrise — mist and low cloud obscured the distant horizon. Dr Ivor Cavill, who had invited me to

join the company, has been testing the proof of this alignment for 28 years. On six occasions, clear visibility has provided the proof. But this was not to be the seventh. It needs, of course, a still frosty night to give a dawn chance of the perfect visibility to prove the alignment. We were able to prove it in theory with an orienteering compass and a set of maps. The standing stones line up straight to point at 120 degrees. If you transpose this to the Ordnance Survey map, the line of sight at 23 miles is a notch in the Lansdown ridge five miles north of Bath at Fressing Hill. You could prove it for yourself. What our Bronze Age predecessors knew by personal observation has become a topic of sufficient interest to drag a small company up the Gray Hill at the time of the midwinter solstice. The hill-top has other reminders of long term human habitation: a Bronze Age burial chamber, now largely collapsed, lies below the standing stones which make the alignment. COLIN LUCKHURST

سكنا من الاله

Diary Matthew Norman

In honour of her sublime defences of government policy towards Saudi disidents and prisoners in labour, I have asked my friend Ann Widdecombe...

Ask us twice and we'll join the union

Commentary Peter Preston

IT IS the very meat of modern Majorism. One jump, not two. What distresses me about the European debate...

sacred British opt-out, which allows us to choose what to do once the bird flaps its wings. Choosing may, or may not, be necessary. Such choices can be exercised by Westminster...

perhaps even a majority of nations — temporarily beached on the outside. Britain's negotiating triumph at Madrid was securing an expert examination of the effects of such a split...

Maastricht conditions. Here was a further small source of trouble and a possible future excuse for cooling on the whole operation...

His ministers have been talking as though there was some European alternative

Thus the expert play becomes, in reality, a commentary on the validity of the British position. We aren't in the Italian, or even Belgian, boat...

examination of the dilemma we secured in Madrid. It can, to a greater or lesser extent, only be a chronicle of reasons for signing up at the first time of asking...

I assume John Major didn't see this coming. His breakfast speech is the cold cut of last year. His ministers have spent the holidays in Tokyo or India, talking of trade or opportunity...

But the unreality is now all-enfolding, no codes and no cautions left. John Major and Ken Clarke and Michael Heseltine have long known the truth, however disguised...

Hail Vivienne, queen of all our hearts

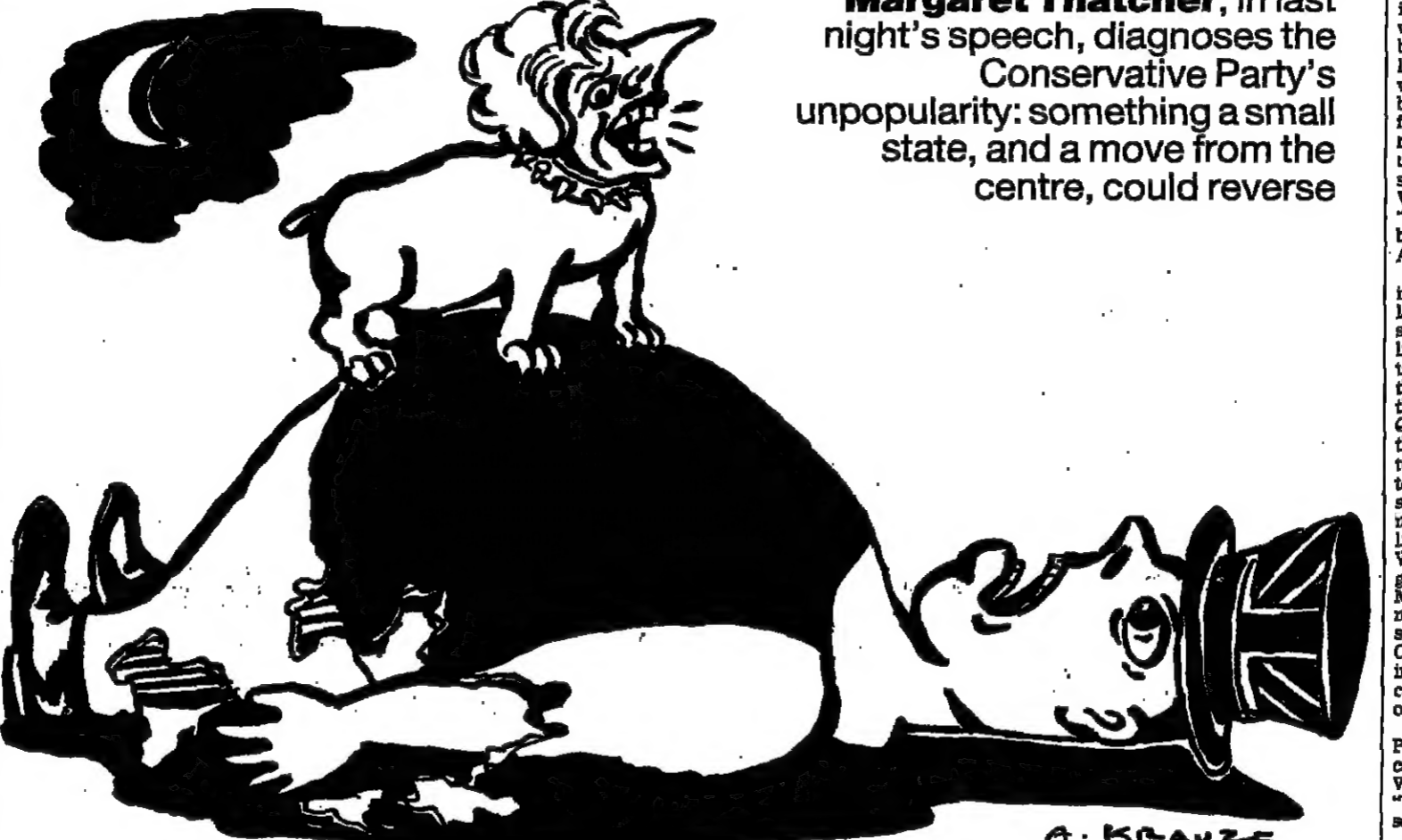


Bel Littlejohn

GRAT to see that Vivienne Westwood is getting some sort of hard-won recognition at last. Why is it we spare so little time in praising our home-grown fashion designers?

leather bustier to lend her a voluptuous-yet-caring look entirely suited to the nineties. But ever since the seventies, Vivienne has remained at the forefront of the social revolution...

Margaret Thatcher, in last night's speech, diagnoses the Conservative Party's unpopularity: something a small state, and a move from the centre, could reverse



The common ground

THE kind of Conservatism which Keith Joseph and I favoured would be best described as "liberal", in the old-fashioned sense. And I mean the liberalism of Mr Gladstone...

importance of custom, convention, tradition, belief, national institutions or what the ancient Romans would describe as "piety". Nor do we dispute that the bonds of society need ultimately to be guaranteed by the state...

the electorate is at present inclined to send us. I believe that this would be ill-judged on their part. The Conservative Party still has much to offer. And from Mr Blair's New — or not so new — Labour Party there is much to fear...

described as "No Nation Conservatism". And certainly anyone who believes that salvation is to be found further away from the basic Conservative principles which prevailed in the eighties — small government, a property-owning democracy, tax cuts, deregulation and national sovereignty — is profoundly mistaken...

a doubling of voluntary giving to good causes. Moreover, though we made mistakes of financial management by allowing the economy to overheat and inflation to rise towards the end of that period, the general advance of prosperity was solidly based upon real economic improvements.

a hugely encouraging men for New Labour, the great Dennis Skinner having written the philosophy of "stake-holding". Behind a group of miners' MPs on a visit to Mr Tony Blair's office earlier this week, to argue for stronger commitments of help to form pit communities...

orchestrated campaign of unparalleled wickedness forces me to take my friend Paul Johnson under the Diary's protective wing. This week's issue of the Spectator carries no fewer than seven letters — including one from Lord Longford — attacking last week's article, ghost-written for Mr Johnson by Paul Johnson's brother, John Johnson...

AT Westminster, there is concern that the office responsible for their Lordships' security documents is going to be able to cope with its workload, following the issuing of a full pass to a dog. The pass has a small photograph of the animal, which belongs to an unnamed peer, and the identification reference "EG". Plans to add a paw print were abandoned due to lack of space on the pass.

THERE are rumours that Mr John Birt has contrived another masterstroke. This time, says an anonymous BBC source, it's something called... wait for it... the Efficiency Vision Office. A power structure designed by Mr Birt and management consultants is to be placed at the centre of the media...

HATS off to the Press Association for a rare and surprising attempt at wit. Yesterday's record omnibus seizure was made the news agency report, "during a joint operation between police and customs officers".

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EXISTS. Let me remind you why. Creativity is necessarily a quality which pertains to individuals. Indeed, perhaps the one immutable law of anthropology is that we are all different. Now, of course, individuals can't fulfil their potential without a society in which to do so.

ely bucked

but in chains

Diary

SALE Les soldes at Roche-Bobois. It is truly the ideal time to furnish one's home at dreamy prices. Leather or fabric sofas, bedrooms accessories, and more!

Hubert Nicholson

Late light in Fitzrovia

HUBERT NICHOLSON, the poet and novelist who died yesterday, aged 87, once heard Dylan Thomas, the up and coming star of the literary thirties...

introduced its audience — old members now bring their children — to the poetry of every age and nation. Nicholson created it in the name of friendship and because spreading the word was a family tradition.

It's a pleasure

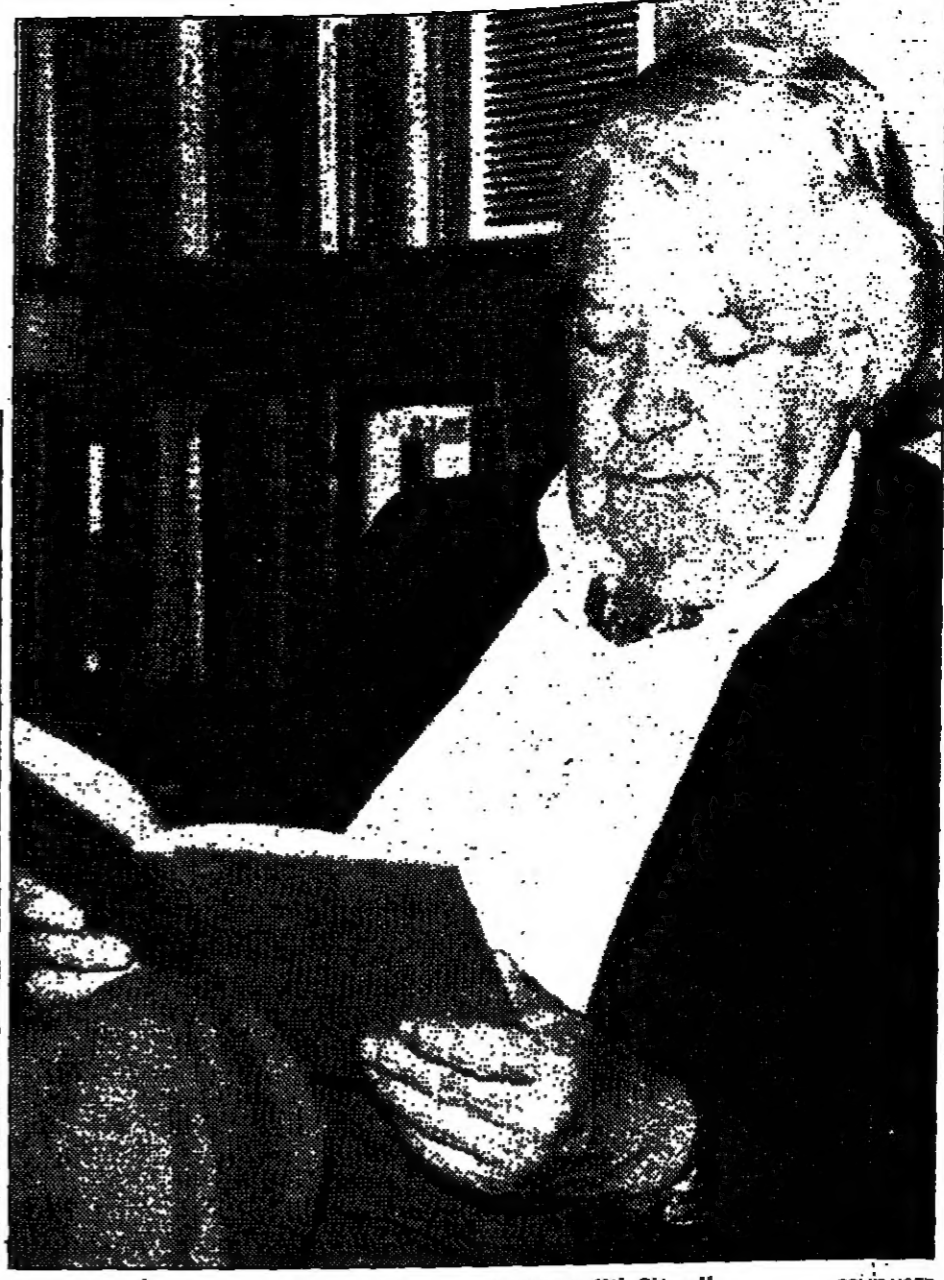
The cold wind of expecting nothing more Even this can be loved As a boy loves the anguish on the dockside corner...

Hubert Nicholson, The Midge In The South (Feinmann 1955)

Nicholson also became a reporter, making his way to London by way of Bristol and Cheltenham. His first book of poems sold out. He married a successful illustrator named Molly...

Nicholson joined Reuters in 1945 and worked there as a senior sub-editor until his retirement in 1968. For many years he lived with the novelist, Barbara Collard. They had two sons and a daughter.

Philip Collins Hubert Nicholson, poet and novelist, born January 23, 1908; died January 11, 1996



Spreading the word... Hubert Nicholson, praised by Edith Sitwell

Gabrielle Keiller

Seizing life by the throat

GABRIELLE KEILLER, who has died aged 87, was one of Britain's great collectors of Surrealist art. Earlier in her life she had been a champion international golfer...

In the front entrance hall at Gabrielle's home, Telegraph Cottage, was displayed an Edward Burra collage. Friendships with art dealers Freddy Mayor and Robert Fraser were lubricants in acquiring new works...



Gabrielle Keiller... golfer and follower of Surrealism

deep psychology that she had an urge to distinguish herself at an activity approved of by her adored late husband, who had privately sponsored British car racing.

Dame Des Fleurs at Robert Fraser's flat — with David Niven and two Hollywood starlets as fellow guests. Next day her duties at the Tate would include a lecture on William Blake.

In the 1960s, it was still possible to acquire new works that had never been seen in Europe before. Robert Fraser's first gallery held an exhibition of Richard Lindner's work, consisting of 12 large paintings...

She was a splendid and wonderful woman. Unique in every sense. Her loss is difficult to estimate. I will always remember her as possessing an indefinable and complex combination of qualities...

Geoffrey Pinnington

Navigator of Fleet Street

FLEET STREET — as, specifically, we mean it still call the newspaper village — has lost another of its giant talents with the death of Geoffrey Pinnington, aged 76.

Leader by the end of the war. That special glance of a navigator's warning signal to his pilot, the fixed "fireball" eye stare, was still there when it swept across a sub table at the Herald or the Mirror...

Perhaps one should also add that the Pinnington temperament as a tough, rigorous disciplinarian, as well as someone who displayed a resolute indifference to anything approaching unctuousness to the Establishment, was also a handicap.

When Pinnington was night editor of the Daily Mirror in the sixties, at the peak of that paper's power and circulation, the Mirror backbench was the most feared in Fleet Street. Around him he built a team of brilliant production journalists...

Perhaps it was the war years that gave Pinnington that sharply disciplined edge. He served in Bomber Command, and as a navigator he guided into action the most attractive, yet dangerously vulnerable, bomber of all: the Wellington. Pinnington gave to love the "Wimpeys", with its extraordinary capacity to take flak. He became one of the most experienced and longest serving navigators in the RAF, rising to Squadron...

Pinnington... a big talent tion was limited. He began his career in national newspapers on the old Daily Herald as deputy news editor in 1955, and two years later became the Herald's northern editor in Manchester. A year later he was brought back to London as deputy editor of the Daily Mirror. It was a time when the Daily Herald was fighting for its life (though it still had a circulation of 1,500,000) and trying to loosen ties with the TUC. As part of that loosening operation, Macbray and Pinnington decided to pitch the...

Birthdays

Kirstie Alley, actress, 41; Anthony Andrews, actor, 48; Hazel Adair, O.C. Sheriff of Lothian and Borders at Edinburgh, 50; Micael Aspel, broadcaster, 63; long John Baldry, singer, 58; P W Botha, former president South Africa, 80; Dr Fiona Caldicott, president Royal College of Psychiatry, 55; Stella Camilleri, statistician, 79; Brendan Cox, former Olympic athlete, 48; Joe Frazier, boxer, 52; James Hilton of Eggarron, former head of training, Metropolitan Police, 60; Henry Hodge, solicitor, 52; Amy Howells, soprano, 55; Jay McShann, jazz pianist, 77; Alan Turing, computer scientist, 80; John Mortimer, former general secretary, Labour Party, 8; Des O'Connor, comedian, singer, 64; William Pleeh, cellist, 80; Luise Rainer, actress, 88; Sir John Rennie, former commissioner-general, UNRWA, 78.

Death Notices

DAWSON-SIMPSON, Ian Douglas on 21 January, generally of Queen Mary's University Hospital, Roehampton, aged 80. He was a member of the Royal Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, a member of the Royal Society of Arts, and a member of the Royal Society of Medicine. He was a member of the Royal Society of Medicine and a member of the Royal Society of Arts. He was a member of the Royal Society of Medicine and a member of the Royal Society of Arts.

HOPKINS, On 6th January, 1996 John Hopkins, aged 72, of Mill House, Old Weston, Herefordshire in retirement at a hospital, Cambridge. Much loved father of Dr. Barnaby, William and Ned, after a long illness most ably borne. Private cremation. No flowers. Donations to: British Heart Foundation, 12 Park Crescent, London W1P 8LP.

PERKINSON, Denis Arthur DFC (Died) aged 81 on 21 December 1995. He had three sons by his first wife and a daughter by his second. A memorial service will be held in the nave of St. Andrew's Church, 117 St. James's Place, London W1 on 17th January 1996 at 11.30 am. Contact: Jonathan Perkinson 0171 275 8871 ext. 0171 275 3200 home.

In Memoriam

FRYER, Wendy, in loving memory who died 10th March 1984. So dearly loved, so truly missed.

Memorial Services

MURPHY, There will be a Memorial Service for Josephine Grace Murphy on the anniversary of her birth, January 20th, 11am, St James's W17. Privately, London W1. We place your announcement telephone 071 611 9988

Jackdaw



Sal 'n' Martie

ABOUT 18 months ago, I went to see Four Weddings And A Funeral at a North London cinema. Very soon I was filled with an urge to be doing something else (standing at a bus stop in the rain, for example); and under normal circumstances I would have walked out after 10 or 15 minutes. But these weren't normal circumstances. Beside me sat Salman Rushdie. For various reasons — various security reasons — we had to stay. Thus the Ayatollah Khomeini had condemned me to sit through Four Weddings And A Funeral; and no Iranian...

torturer could have elicited a greater variety of wincing and finches, of pleadings and whimperings. One was obliged to submit, and absorb a few social lessons, in agonising surroundings. It felt like a reversal of the Charles Adams cartoon: I sat there, thoroughly aghast, while everyone about me (save the author of The Satanic Verses) giggled and gurgled, hugging themselves with the deliriousness of it all. The only good bit was when you realised that the titular funeral was going to feature Simon Callow. I clenched my fist and said yes. At least one of them was going to die.

"Well," I said, when it was over, "that was bottomlessly horrible. Why is it so popular?" "Because," said Salman, "the world has had taste. Didn't you know that?" Martin Amis goes to the movies with Salman Rushdie. From the New Yorker.

That was when

WE WERE born before television, before penicillin,

polio shots, frozen foods, Xerox, plastic, contact lenses, videos, Frisbees and the Pill. We were before radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams and ballpoint pens, before dishwashers, tumble driers, electric blankets, air conditioners, drip-dry clothes... and before man walked on the moon. We got married first and then lived together. We thought "fast food" was what you ate at Lent, a "big Mac" was an oversized raincoat and "crumpet" we had for tea. We existed before house husbands, computer dating, dual cassettes, and when a "meaningful relationship" meant getting along with cousins, and "sheltered accommodation" was where you waited for a bus.

We were before day care centres, group homes and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM radio, tape decks, electric typewriters, artificial hearts, word processors, yoghurt and young men wearing earrings. For us "time-sharing" meant togetherness, a "chip" was a piece of wood or fried potato,

"hardware" meant nuts and bolts and "software" wasn't a word. From We Are Survivors, a mission statement by and for those who were born before 1940 and produced in aid of the Myton Humlet Hospice.

Bill 'n' Ronnie

THERE IS a room on the second floor of the White House called the Yellow Oval Room, and I gather that this remains President Reagan's favourite place in the great house we have both been privileged to inhabit. I bring this up because the Yellow Oval Room, more than any other place in this magnificent old building, best sums up Ronald Reagan's greatest gift to us as President — the way his own unwavering hopefulness reminded us that optimism is one of our most fundamental virtues. No one room could better represent what Americans love about President Reagan. We remember the summiness of his temperament during eight years in office; the room's colour gives it a...

steady glow during clear days and stormy ones alike. Its view is expansive... The landscape conveys a sense that the possibilities of America go on forever. President Reagan had that gift too. From his window, you can see families walking along the Mall, people driving to work along Constitution Avenue, children playing softball on the Ellipse. And they can look up from what they are...



Oval time... Vanity Fair

doing and almost see inside a bit, too... This room represents something unique about the American sense of democracy. It is situated in such a way that we — voters and Presidents — can keep one another always in mind. President Bill Clinton looks out of his Oval Room window on the little people below. Rivalling the colonising of his wife, Hillary, Bill's ecology to former President Reagan appeared in Vanity Fair.

Dead hand

TWO WEEKS ago a prosecutor in Munich managed, almost casually, to strike a blow against freedom of expression. Though he is a person of such obscurity that most of the accounts I've read of this incident didn't even mention his name, he has been able to constrict the information flow for some 4 million people in 140 countries. He did this merely by telling Compuserve, the world's second-largest online-service provider, that it was breaking Bavarian law by giving Germans access to...

Usenet discussion groups believed to include explicit sexuality... Once again the jackboots of the Industrial Era can be heard stomping cluelessly around the Infobahn. In fact, the Germans did almost nothing to stanch the flow of sexual material... As Internet pioneer John Gilmore once said, "The Net interprets censorship as damage and routes around it"... But the issue at stake here is larger than whether the good people of Munich can prevent others half a world away from looking at pictures of sexually misused hamsters. These apparently trivial struggles may in fact be the opening fissures of a historical discontinuity.

The real issue is control. The Internet is too widespread to be easily dominated by any single government. By creating a seamless global economic zone, borderless and unregulatable, the Internet calls into question the very idea of a nation-state. No wonder nation-states are rushing to get their levers of control into cyberspace while less than one per cent of the...

world's population is online.

What the Net offers is the promise of a new social space, global and anti-sovereign, within which anybody, anywhere can express to the rest of humanity whatever he or she believes without fear. There is in this new media a freshening of the intellectual and economic liberty that might undo all the authoritarian powers on earth. That's why Germany the People's Republic of China and the US are girding to fight the net using the popular distaste for prurience as their longest lever.

Former Grateful Dead lyricist turned Internet activist John Perry Barlow takes on the would-be censors in the imaginatively titled thinking Globally, Acting Locally, published in Time magazine.

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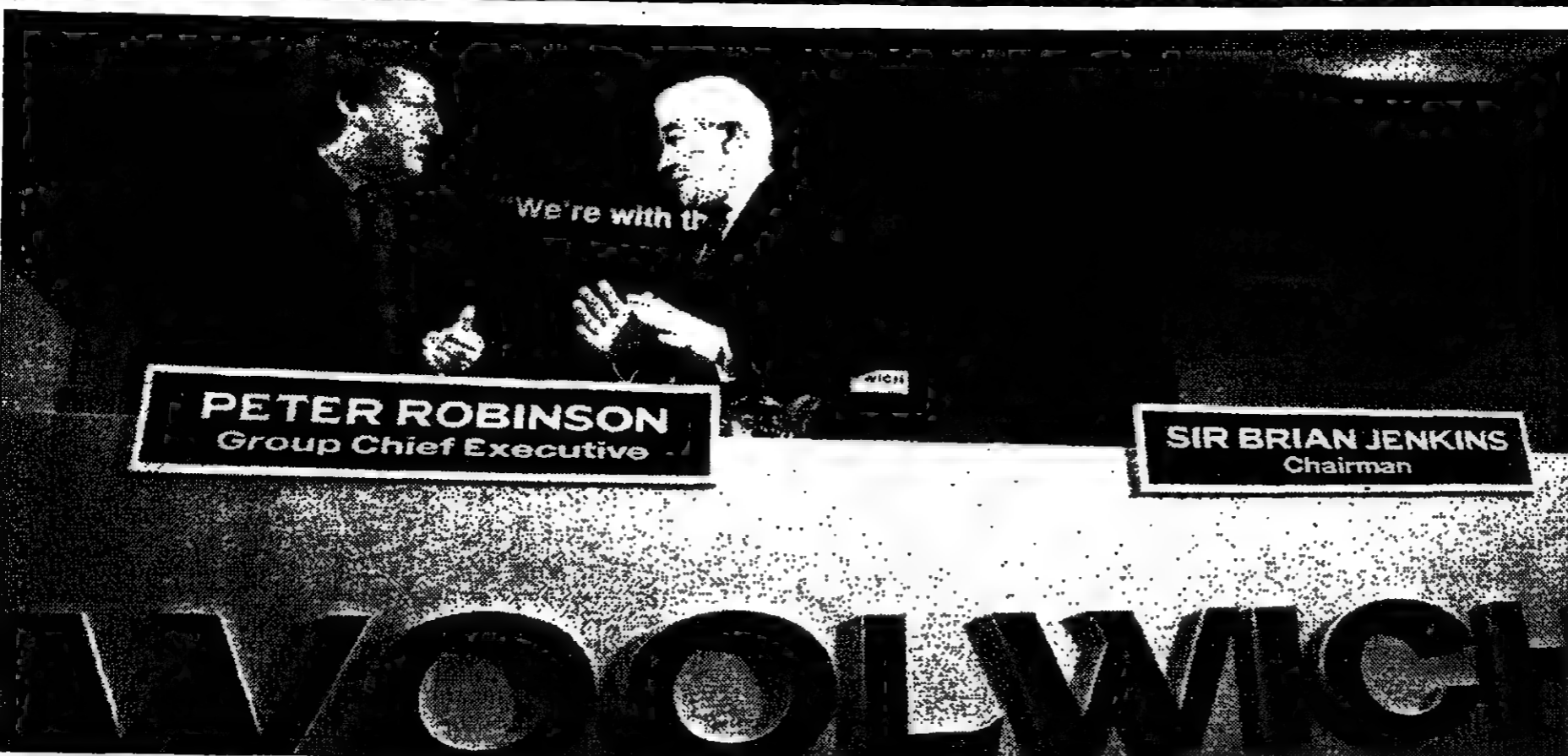
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Finance Guardian

Pressure grows on building societies to make up their minds on a change of status



PETER ROBINSON
Group Chief Executive

SIR BRIAN JENKINS
Chairman

Woolwich chief Peter Robinson (left) and chairman Sir Brian Jenkins. The society 'has no intention of allowing itself to be overtaken by events'.

Alliance tipped to follow Woolwich

Teresa Hunter and Cliff Jones

THE building society world will lose one of its staunchest defenders following the Woolwich's announcement yesterday that it plans to convert to a bank next year. A close competitor, the Alliance & Leicester, is predicted to follow soon, despite saying yesterday it did not intend to be rushed into a decision. The Woolwich's move put more pressure on other building societies to decide where their future lies. Sir Brian Jenkins, chairman of the Woolwich, said pic status was more appropriate for large personal finance groups, where the relationship with members had changed.

Peter Robinson, the chief executive, said: "Powerful forces for change in the personal financial services markets are producing intense competition that will polarise the industry into well-defined groups of large and niche players. The Woolwich is not a niche player and has no intention of allowing itself to be overtaken by events, as larger groups form in our marketplace." Rob Thomas, UBS housing analyst, said the remaining societies must decide whether they wish to convert to public companies, which they have been contemplating for years, or return to their historical roots and become true mutuals operating exclusively for the benefit of members. "They can no longer fiddle



while the sector burns," he said. Societies, such as the Nationwide, Bradford & Bingley, Birmingham Midshires and Yorkshire, which have

nailed flags to the mutual mast, may finally account for less than a quarter of the mortgage lending market. Nationwide chief executive, Brian Davies, said: "We undertook a thorough review of our status, and concluded it was not in the interests of our members to spend a lot of their money becoming a bank." Other societies such as the Bristol & West, Britannia and Skipton have yet to make up their mind. They must ask how long their members will be content for their building society to preserve large profits, while others are getting big windfalls. Members are gradually realising how rich their societies are. Profits increased as a whole by 70 per cent between 1992 and 1994. Bristol & West's earnings leapt from

£14 million to £57 million, those at the Nationwide swelled from £172 million to £345 million and the Woolwich itself pushed profits up from £149 million to £303 million. Profits for last year are expected to be 20 per cent higher at the Woolwich, the UK's third largest building society, which has assets of some £28 billion, 13 subsidiaries and overseas operations. However, the Woolwich's costs are high, with a cost income ratio above the industry's average at 48 per cent, compared with the Halifax's 41 per cent. The society said conversion would allow it greater freedom to raise additional capital and more scope for "profitable growth". The Abbey National blamed the conversion trail when it

became a bank in 1989, and it recently agreed a merger with the National & Provincial. The biggest ever building society flotation will take place next year when the Halifax, newly merged with the Leeds, comes to the market in a £10 billion sale. Woolwich members will vote on its proposals in the spring of next year and a proposal to members simply to be able to raise more is circulating. Moreover, mutuals have shown themselves just as able to make acquisitions — the Alliance & Leicester has merged with Grobank — as public companies. Indeed, the opportunities for cementing in some of the bigger or more effective second-line societies — such as the Britannia and the Chelsea — are just as great for a mutual as for a pic. The net result of the Woolwich move is that it will become a takeover target as soon as it comes out of the five-year cooling-off period provided by the Building Societies Act. As a mutual the Woolwich is one of the bigger beasts in the jungle; as a public quoted bank it is a minority that will be picked off in the blink of an eye.

Movement is left in the hands of true believers

OUTLOOK/Ian Wylie reports on options facing those who are left

ANOTHER pillar of the building society movement crumbled yesterday, but the walls stood firm in branches of the Tipton & Cosley, Ilkeston Permanent and Earl Shilton. The Woolwich's plan to float places the medium-to-large societies in a predicament. Yesterday, most pledged their souls to remaining mutually-owned organisations, but pressure to convert, or at least merge grows stronger with every defection. The building society movement has been shrinking for 50 years, and since 1989, when the Abbey National converted to bank status, the sector will have lost almost 44 per cent of its total assets, including the loss of the Woolwich. Last week's merger between the City and Metropolitan building society and the Shroud & Swindon was unusual; small-society mergers have failed off. Few societies outside the top 20 have the

critical mass of mortgage and deposit accounts to make them worthwhile takeover targets, let alone conversion prospects. On the evidence of "best buy" guides, business for many of the smaller societies has never been so good. This month's Consumers' Association report on Tax Exempt Special Savings Accounts (Tessas) excludes the Halifax, Nationwide and Woolwich from the top 10. Instead, praise is reserved for minnows such as the Dryfield Trust, Londonderry Provident, Mercantile and Vernon. Mortgage tables tell a similar story. Behind the counter, however, smaller societies are finding it difficult to sustain such competitive mortgage and savings rates. While the banks and larger societies can raise cheap finance wholesale, smaller societies rely on deposits. However, new legislation will ease some of their money-raising restrictions and the Building Societies Association is investigating ways in which societies could "federate" to share costs for such efforts as wholesale fund-raising and computer development. A report published last July

by Touche Ross rejected claims that the current wave of building society flotations and takeovers would obliterate the sector. However, the study warned that only the "small, lean and focused" societies would survive. Some smaller societies, such as the Cumberland, have dangled loyalty bonuses in the form of mortgage discounts and savings increases. Building society analyst Rob Thomas of UBS believes most small and medium sized societies could afford to give away a loyalty bonus of at least 1 per cent on their mortgage rates. But others consider bonuses to be only a stop-gap solution. BSA chairman and Portman chief executive Ken Cudley says they "take us closer to something which we are not" and sees the only way forward being for societies to differentiate themselves. Many have already heeded the advice. Some, such as the Market Harborough have developed innovative mortgage products allowing parents to assist first-time buyers. The three-branch Chorley & District is piloting a drive-through branch where customers can pay their mortgage or deposit savings

Building society payouts

- June 1995 Abbey National converted to bank status
- April 1994 Lloyds Bank announced takeover of Cheltenham & Gloucester Building society. C&G members receive minimum payout of £500
- Nov 1994 Halifax & Leeds announce merger and conversion to bank status. Expected payout of £200 for members of both societies
- July 1995 Abbey National takes over National & Provincial. N&P members to be awarded £500 free Abbey shares
- Jan 1995 Woolwich announces conversion to PLC. Members expected to receive at least £500 free shares

Possible windfalls

- Alliance & Leicester £580** The favourite to follow the Woolwich. Big enough to stand on its own as a bank
- Bradford & Bingley £600** Committed to mutuality, but could take over a smaller society to become one of the largest
- Bristol & West £390** Could be tempted to merge with a similar society to compete
- Britannia £630** It could be a takeover target for a large bank
- Chelsea £1000** It could be a takeover target for a large bank
- Coverity £600** Assets of £3.21 billion, could merge with another small society
- Nationwide £530** Tipped to follow Woolwich and become a bank. Assets £35.7 billion
- Northern Rock £500** Dedicated to our members' remains the case, but could merge with another

without leaving their cars. Others believe the future of the building society movement lies in its roots. The Marsden building society, a pioneer of in-branch debt counselling, is developing a role in social housing in Lancashire. Through initiatives with housing associations and charities, chief executive Eddie Shepley says the Marsden is able to

meet the growing demand for good quality rented accommodation, while the banks and larger societies slug it out for owner-occupiers. "Building societies were established to meet a need for housing, not for banking," he says. "Even if the building society movement does disappear in the next 10 years, someone will have to reinvent it."

Robinson proves a quick mover

THE decision to sell the Woolwich was taken just two days after its new chief executive Peter Robinson took control of the society, writes Teresa Hunter. The building society world had long speculated that the Woolwich would acquire a very different kind of chief executive when the mild-mannered Donald Kirkham, a long-standing disciple of mutuality, retired at the end of last year. As recently as last June, Mr Kirkham warned that conversion to pic status would mean lower savings rates for investors. Yet the decision to become a bank was taken two days after Mr Robinson, a flamboyant South London "boy" who has been chief executive in waiting for nearly a decade, moved into the hot seat. But then after 30 years with the Woolwich he has had a long time to think about it — and he comes from a dynamic family. His brother Alan Robinson is reputed to have made £10 million when Jackson's estate agents, of which he was a co-owner, was sold to the Halifax in the mid-1980s. The decision to convert the Woolwich into a bank would not have been Mr Robinson's alone. The board acquired a new "City-focussed" chairman last year in Lord Brian Jenkins, a former Lord Mayor of London.

Notebook

A sturdy mutual mortgages future



Edited by Alex Brummer

IT HAS taken Peter Robinson, the Woolwich building society's new chief executive, just 11 days to dismantle what was 150 years in the making, a solid, mutually owned entity which enjoys the trust and esteem of its members. Now that the Woolwich has taken the plunge and is to become a publicly quoted bank regulated by the Bank of England, the best guess must be that the remaining two building societies of similar stature, Alliance & Leicester and Nationwide, will have to consider their positions. Despite some efforts in the building society movement to build the intellectual case for preserving the mutual format, there is no reason to believe that Woolwich members will do anything but cash in the shares that will be offered. In making the decision to go public, the Woolwich has bought into the argument made fashionable by Peter Birch of the Abbey National, which is that the pic form offers building societies the chance to raise capital and make acquisitions. Both arguments are questionable. The logic of giving away some £3 billion of capital to members simply to be able to raise more is circular. Moreover, mutuals have shown themselves just as able to make acquisitions — the Alliance & Leicester has merged with Grobank — as public companies. Indeed, the opportunities for cementing in some of the bigger or more effective second-line societies — such as the Britannia and the Chelsea — are just as great for a mutual as for a pic. The net result of the Woolwich move is that it will become a takeover target as soon as it comes out of the five-year cooling-off period provided by the Building Societies Act. As a mutual the Woolwich is one of the bigger beasts in the jungle; as a public quoted bank it is a minority that will be picked off in the blink of an eye.

ity every time the oil price climbs. Global competition is growing annually at 0.07 per cent — the equivalent of four new mega-refineries. BP's decision to shed 30 per cent of its refining capacity will allow it to concentrate on building up its most efficient plants where worthwhile profits can still be made. Although global margins are averaging around \$2.4 a barrel, the best refiners can crank up returns to the \$8 level. At the same time, BP's shake-up will allow it to wipe out estimated annual refining losses of up to \$200 million. And it is looking to reduce annual investment on refining by about one-third to \$300 million. It is baffling why BP's share price took the news so negatively. It has recognised that competition within the refining market is not sustainable. Several of its competitors may well follow suit.

Bank clean-up

BANKING supervisors are like football referees. The less they are noticed, the better they are said to be performing. Once either has to start reaching for the red cards, however, controversy erupts. The Bank of England has been no stranger to regulatory controversy, most recently over the Barings affair, where it came in for sharp criticism and a string of recommendations from the Board of Banking Supervision (BoBS). Yesterday the Bank delivered an interim response to the BoBS proposals which, not surprisingly, asserted it was making good progress towards meeting them. There is a commonsense air about much of the work now going on. Making sure banks appoint a senior officer to take responsibility for statistical returns will concentrate minds and ensure that what might otherwise be dismissed as a clerical chore is given a higher profile. The guidelines laid down for what constitutes "significant" risk should also ensure that alarm bells start ringing earlier than at Barings. Nor are closer links with other regulators likely to come amiss. However, the best bit of BoBS yet to come. In spring or early summer, Arthur Andersen will deliver its independent verdict on how the Bank shapes up against its regulatory peers. Can't wait!

Refining returns

EVEN if BP has to spend the full \$1 billion it has put aside to cover the costs of slimming its oil refinery operations, that will be money well spent. The company insists it can find buyers for the three refineries it is shutting down. But it is hard to see who will buy loss-making assets in a business that has always proved a triumph of hope over hard commercial experience. The tempting aspect of new oil refineries is that there are no technological barriers to entry. This has resulted in a spurge of construction activity.

Moving out

SLOWLY but surely the legacy of high street brands is being dismantled by its successors. Saxe and Curless move on to the scrap heap of history alongside Freeman, Hardy, Willis and Olympus, which have been sold off. Even Millets, the camper's friend, is to be sold in favour of developing out-of-town brands Shoe City and Shoe Express. Ironically, Sears is loosening its grip on the high street just as our better retailers, Tesco and Boots, are moving back.

Factory output stagnates as firms dig into stockpiles

FACTORY output stagnated in November as firms met weak home-grown and overseas demand from stockpiles rather than production lines, government officials said yesterday. A cold snap boosted gas and electricity suppliers but manufacturing activity was unchanged between October and November — and only 0.4 per cent up on the same month in 1994 — according to the Central Statistical Office. Analysts said the slowdown reinforced the case for action from the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, on interest rates. Ian Stewart, UK economist at Merrill Lynch, said: "The softening of the manufacturing economy... will provide the Chancellor with further arguments for cutting base rates."

Some economists are looking for a cut in the cost of borrowing next week, when Mr Clarke meets the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss monetary policy. But the authorities may leave rates unchanged on the grounds that the manufacturing sector will rebound of its own accord once companies have wound down stocks. Overall industrial production was up by 0.5 per cent in November — driven by a 3.5 per cent monthly jump in 1994 — after a 0.8 per cent fall the previous month. The CSO's index of total industrial production was 0.2 per cent higher between September and November than in the previous three-month period. But factory production was 0.1 per cent down on a three-monthly basis and only 0.8 per cent higher than in the same three months of 1994.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS			
Australia 2.01	France 7.39	Italy 2.380	Singapore 2.15
Austria 15.00	Germany 2.14	Malta 0.34	South Africa 5.63
Belgium 44.00	Greece 380.00	Netherlands 2.41	Spain 180.00
Canada 2.05	Hong Kong 11.74	New Zealand 2.28	Sweden 10.00
Cyprus 0.88	India 55.23	Norway 5.50	Switzerland 1.72
Denmark 8.54	Ireland 0.94	Portugal 224.00	Turkey 88.010
Finland 6.5	Israel 4.82	Saudi Arabia N/A	USA 1.5100

Granada spices up £3.8bn with some chicken wings

Menu madness breaks out in the battle for Forte. Ian King reports

NEVER before can the spicy chicken wing have assumed such paramount importance. Yesterday, it was wheeled out by Granada as the latest weapon in its £3.8 billion assault on Forte, presented as an example of the kind of fare Little Chef customers can look forward to if the chain falls under Granada's ownership. Granada's chief executive Gerry Robinson, who has already introduced Burger King to the group's motorway service stations, said

Granada had gone to the trouble of devising new menus for Little Chef and this was a sign of how carefully the company had prepared its bid. Other treats Granada is proposing to offer Little Chef's millions of customers include Potato Long Boats — a variety of filled potato skin — Wings 'n' Things combos, giant blueberry muffins, hot chicken baguettes and Mississippi mud pie. But truckers and other lovers of Little Chef's (in-

famous All Day Breakfast can rest assured that it is not one of the products under attack. Granada said it was "inconceivable" that Little Chef would not continue to offer the product. Other items on the Little Chef menu — which include Linda McCartney's Special Recipe vegetarian burger, the Big Dipper Deal and the Big 7 Burger — may not be quite so lucky. Mr Robinson hinted that several items might be discontinued, although he did not specify which particular ones were on the culinary equivalent of Death Row. He added: "The old Little Chef menus are tired and

neglected, and have not been substantially changed since 1988. Our new ideas will improve both the standard of service and food offered at Little Chef." However, Forte hit back at once, insisting that many of the "new" products Granada was proposing to offer were already available at certain Little Chef restaurants after 9pm. Tony Monnikendam, Forte's group director of restaurants, bristled at the suggestion that Mr Robinson was less than enthused by delights such as Little Chef's Mushroom Dippers and Rocky Toffee. He said: "Granada has spent the last 20 years fail-

ing to develop a table service that works in their motorway service areas, so why do they think they can do it in our roadside restaurants?" One big question on the Little Chef menu unanswered by both sides last night was what might happen to it in the event of Granada's bid failing and Forte, as promised, selling Little Chef to Whitbread. Analysis might raise one nagging doubt about Granada's proposals. The company has made a great deal, during this takeover battle, of its ability to squeeze bigger profits from its assets by widening profit margins. The trick Mr Robin-

son revealed on Wednesday, is to offer people products that encourage them to spend more. Yet it is hard to see how Granada, in some cases, could seriously contemplate increasing some of the prices at Little Chef, which charges 75p for a portion of baked beans, 40p for a "mini jar" of marmalade and 80p for a portion of peas. One thing is certain, however. Granada, when pressed by the Guardian, pledged to preserve the Little Chef Jubilee Pancake, replete with red cherries and vanilla ice cream. Some things, after all, are sacred.

High street tills jingle at record Christmas rate but one group says it is hell for leather

CBI confirms retail recovery

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

BRITAIN'S high streets enjoyed their best month's trading for two years as consumers flocked to the shops during the Christmas period, the CBI reports today.

With the employers' group convinced that retail spending is emerging from the doldrums, the survey provides backing for the Government's belief that consumers will be the driving force behind economic growth this year.

However, the CBI remains cautious about the strength of the high street recovery, saying there is a risk that the increase in activity has been triggered by an early start to the winter sales.

Signs that bargain-hunting may have provided some of the impetus for December's shopping spree comes from the detail of the CBI's distributive trades survey.

This shows that shops selling clothes, footwear and leather goods — where discounting has been widespread — experienced the best year-on-year growth in sales volumes.

The retail group Storehouse reported yesterday that sales in the six weeks before Christmas were 4 per cent higher than the previous year on a comparable basis.

Storehouse said Mothercare suffered from a difficult market for childrenswear and sales were below expectations, while Blazer had a successful Christmas.

The sales of womenswear, homewares and fashion accessories showed encouraging growth, but childrenswear and menswear sales were down on last year, Storehouse added.

The CBI said big super-

market chains and chemists also did well, and figures released yesterday by Boots showed total sales rose 5.4 per cent in the 13 weeks to the end of December.

Same-store sales, or sales at stores open for at least a year, rose 5.1 per cent at the core Boots the Chemists outlets. Total sales at the pharmacy unit increased 5.9 per cent.

By contrast, specialist food shops such as independent butchers and greengrocers continued to be squeezed by the big supermarket chains and reported that sales were lower than 12 months earlier.

Furniture and carpet retailers were the only other high street sector to report an annual decline in business. Alastair Sporon, chairman of the CBI's distributive trades panel, said the pick-up in sales last month suggested that consumers were spending more freely than last year in the run-up to Christmas.

He added: "Looking ahead, it is encouraging that retailers expect December's growth to be maintained in January. However, we need to be cautious as last month's strong trading performance may have been partly achieved through an earlier start to sales activity reflecting intense competition among retailers. This may have encouraged consumers to hunt for bargains a month earlier than usual."

Analysts share the CBI's wariness about the chances of consumer spending rising this year by the 3.5 per cent predicted by the Chancellor in last November's Budget, particularly in the absence of further reductions in interest rates.

Yesterday's CBI data found that retailers were meeting demand from stocks rather than through new orders, a factor behind the recent stall in manufacturing output.



On its uppers... Saxone's fate will be sealed within the next three months. It may face closure. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Down-at-heel Sears puts shoe shops up for sale

Lisa Buckingham
on market pressure to shuffle off Curtess and Saxone chains

SEARS, the problem-ridden retail group whose businesses include Selfridges, Debenhams and the Freeman Hardy Willis shoe chain, said it planned to sell or close its Saxone and Curtess shoe chains putting thousands of employees' jobs in jeopardy. The group said it has already received a number of approaches and expects to announce within the next two-to-three months whether the 136 shoe outlets, which produce combined sales of about £140 million a year, will be salvaged.

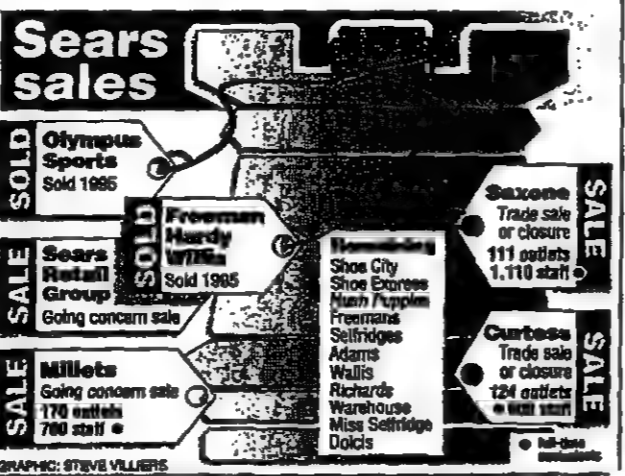
The disclosure came as Sears, which was displaced from the FTSE index of Britain's largest 100 companies last month, unveiled a disappointing 1.9 per cent fall in the second half to early January, even though its flagship department store, Selfridges, notched up a 12.5 per cent advance. If the shoe shops were excluded, like-for-like sales rose by 4.8 per cent.

Sears recently sold its Olympus sportswear chain for about £25 million and last summer disposed of the Freeman Hardy Willis shoe shops. It has also unwound a joint venture in Germany and said yesterday it would be seeking buyers for its retail arm in Holland, as well as for the 170 store Millets chain, both of which are understood to be profitable. Once the disposals are com-

pleted, Sears — which once sold one in every four pairs of shoes in Britain — will have shed 1,230 outlets and 450 con-

cessions in the past 18 months. Saxone has 111 outlets and employs 1,100 full-time equivalent staff, while

Curtess has 600 full-time equivalent jobs in its 124 branches. Many of the employees work part time, however.



Chief executive, Liam Strong, said the group intended to focus on its other shoe retailing brands which include Shoe City, Shoe Express and Dolcis.

The company will make a one-off charge of £65 million to cover the cost of the disposals, as well as a reorganisation of its accounting, logistics and information technology operation which will be outsourced to Andersen Consulting. It is estimated, however, that getting rid of Curtess and Saxone will add £8 million a year to profits from the start of next year and the technology reorganisation should produce savings of £20 to £25 million a year by the year 2000.

News in brief

MPs to investigate stock market crisis

THE confidence crisis facing the Stock Exchange is to be investigated by the all-party Commons Treasury Committee. The inquiry comes after the sacking of chief executive Michael Lawrence, who left following market dissatisfaction about proposed reforms. The market authority is expected to unveil details today of how it plans to transform the City share market by introducing "order-driven" trading. — Patrick Donovan

Row over Ideal Homes sale

A FIERCE row erupted last night between house-builder Beazer Homes and conglomerate Trafalgar House over the sale of Trafalgar's housing division, Ideal Homes. Following Trafalgar's announcement that it was in exclusive talks to sell Ideal to house-builder Persimmon for around £150 million, Beazer said it was "both surprised and disappointed" because it had offered to buy Ideal itself. Beazer said it had told Trafalgar two years ago that it was keen to buy Ideal and that it had continued to signal its interest ever since. Last week it made a cash offer for Ideal, believed to be in the region of £160 million. — Pauline Springett

No help for Eurotunnel

EUROTUNNEL'S hopes that the British and French governments would help underwrite its £8 billion debt restructuring operation were dashed yesterday as ministers from both countries ruled out any intervention in a private sector financing deal. Shares fell 4p to 80p after officials made it clear that Eurotunnel could expect no government help in restructuring its enormous bank debts. On the Paris bourse, Eurotunnel shares were down 30 centimes at Fr6.20. Both governments reacted in response to reports that Eurotunnel chairman, Sir Alastair Morton, was asking for help to back a rescue bond issue. — Patrick Donovan

Maxwell jury still out

THE Maxwell trial jury spent its fourth night in a hotel last night having failed, at the end of a total of 27 hours' deliberation, to reach a verdict. Should they reach no conclusion by tonight, the five men and seven women will be moved to a different hotel, said judge Lord Justice Phillips. Jurors will continue to deliberate between 9.30am and 5pm on Saturday and, if no verdict has been reached, they will be given Sunday off, the judge said. Kevin Maxwell denies one charge of conspiring with his late father Robert to defraud pensioners by misusing £100 million of pension-fund assets. Kevin, Ian Maxwell and financial adviser Larry Trachtenberg deny a second charge of conspiring together to defraud pensioners by misusing £22 million of pension-fund assets.

Apple's woes go to core

APPLE Computer's woes yesterday deepened when the computer company announced an expected loss of \$68 million for its first fiscal quarter ended December 29. Apple is set to announce yet another restructuring with the possible loss of 1,000 jobs. The projected loss is double Wall Street estimates and it intensifies pressure on Apple chairman, Michael Spindler, to resign while also casting doubts on the company's ability to survive on its own. — Mark Tran in New York

UB sells Keebler operation

UNITED Biscuits, the snack manufacturer which dropped out of the FTSE 100 index last year, yesterday said it had completed the sale of its Keebler frozen Foods operations in America to Windsor Food Company for £45 million. However, UB — which has sold the business to Windsor Food Company — admitted that the final sale price was lower than the \$54.8 million it had admitted it expected to raise when the sale was originally announced. It put the Keebler division up for sale in November. — Ian King

Stockbrokers get together

TWO of London's oldest stockbroking firms, Quilter Goodson and Foster & Braithwaite will be merged by March. The new firm, Quilter & Co, will be jointly owned by insurer Commercial Union, parent of Quilter Goodson, and French bank Credit Commercial de France which owns Foster & Braithwaite. CU will have the largest shareholding. John Vincent, currently managing director of Foster & Braithwaite, will become managing director of the new company, with Barrie Catchpole, currently a director of Quilter Goodson, becoming deputy managing director. — Pauline Springett

Pepsi adds more fizz to UK

PEPSI-Cola plans to spend millions of pounds to launch Mountain Dew, a citrus-flavoured fizzy drink, into Britain's £8 billion a year soft drinks market. Mountain Dew — which will be sold through Pepsi's UK partner, Britvic — is already estimated to command sales of \$2.7 billion a year in the US. — Lisa Buckingham

Ofwat seeks legal curb on cost of connections

Nicholas Bamister
Technology Editor

THE water regulator, Ian Byatt, is to seek new legislation to prevent water companies from charging excessive prices for connecting houses to the mains.

Mr Byatt, the director general of Ofwat, said yesterday that most companies had standing connection charges which bore little relation to the work involved.

Charges differ widely between companies. The cost of putting in a 5-metre connection pipe linking a customer's domestic water pipe to the main, for example, ranged from £310 to £826. The regulator wants customers to be able to choose from a list of company approved contractors, to encourage more realistic charges.

He is also concerned that customers are unaware that they can appeal to him if they think they are being overcharged. He is proposing that any literature relating to connections must refer to his powers to intervene.

He said he had dealt with only 63 connection disputes over the past three years — though 51 of them had involved excessive charging. The water companies make between 100,000 and 120,000 connections a year, mainly to new properties or when customers' old or leaking pipes are replaced.

"Some companies' costs for their own labour compare well with market rates," he said. "Others do not."

A spokesman for the Water Services Association, representing the 10 privatised water and sewage companies, said that a number of companies already allowed developers and builders to carry out connection work.

Swab cuts 650 jobs as fear of more losses in sector grows

Geoffrey Gibbs

SOUTH WESTERN Electric, the US-controlled power distribution company, is to cut more than 600 jobs following a four-month review of the business.

The Bristol headquarters company, taken over last year by Southern Electric International, disclosed last night that 650 jobs would go between now and the end of 1997, cutting the workforce by about 16 per cent.

The cuts bring to more than 1,000 the number of job losses announced by electricity companies this week following news that Central Power is cutting 400 at its Swindon headquarters.

A Swab spokesman said the cuts would "be managed in a planned and structured way to ensure our customer satisfaction. It will involve all parts of the business and all parts of our territory."

The spokesman said the cutbacks would be achieved entirely through voluntary means and that discussions had already begun with union representatives. He added that redundancy terms would be "very generous".

Swab was the first regional electricity company to fall under foreign control and its new owners are among the first to wield the axe on jobs.

With the electricity sector still the focus of huge job reductions, other RECs which have been taken over are also expected to force through redundancy schemes in a bid to achieve cost savings.

BP to write off \$1bn in refineries shake-up

Patrick Donovan
City Editor

BRITISH Petroleum yesterday unveiled a shake-up of its worldwide oil-refining operations by announcing plans to close up to 30 per cent of its crude processing capacity, resulting in a \$1.075 billion (£712 million) after-tax write-off.

The surprise move was aimed at boosting the profitability of its downstream operations, which had been hit by a global glut of refining capacity, said BP chief executive John Browne.

Plans involve the sale of loss-making refineries in Lima, Ohio and Levers in the south of France, which together employ nearly 1,100 people.

BP is also looking to pull out of the Nereco refinery,

Rotterdam, in which it holds a 65 per cent stake. Mr Browne said he expected buyers to come forward but warned that plants would still close if no sales could be agreed.

The shake-up will reduce BP overall refining capacity from 2 million to 1.4 million barrels a day and could lead to annual savings of \$100 million-\$200 million.

This will leave BP with an overall shortfall because its current refining needs run at around 1.8 billion barrels a day. Mr Browne insisted that BP had no option but to slim down its operations because of increased competition. Refining capacity worldwide was increasing at around 0.07 per cent annually — the equivalent of four new installations being brought on stream in the US every year. Shares in BP tumbled by

18p to 519p, with brokers alarmed by the size of the after-tax write-off. The charge — which includes \$610 million for overall losses and closure costs plus \$464.5 million environmental provisions — will be included in BP's fourth-quarter figures, due next month.

Mr Browne said that BP wanted to ensure that any refinery it operated was among the 26 per cent most profitable installations within any of its regions.

Insisting that BP had no plans to further reduce its refining capacity, he said profits could still be made by the most efficient operators. The restructuring programme would bring BP's global refining-to-marketing ratio closer to that of other key industry players, most of whom refine less than they sell", he said.

Lonrho to demerge its mining operations

Pauline Springett

LONGRHO, the mining and trading conglomerate, yesterday put an end to months of City speculation by confirming plans to demerge its mining operation and float it as a separate company in the next three to six months.

The move, which must have shareholder approval, is a vital part of the radical shake-up of the group masterminded by chief executive Dieter Bock. Mr Bock, who ousted his predecessor and Lonrho's founder Tiny Rowland last year, is the largest private shareholder in the company, with an 18.6 per cent stake. Mr Rowland still owns 6.3 per cent.

Mr Bock dismissed suggestions that Mr Rowland could

frustrate the demerger, and said he had taken the decision because he wanted to ensure that the value of the group's assets was properly reflected in the share price.

The new mining company would probably have an initial market capitalisation of about £1.4 billion and would include 41 per cent of gold producer Ashanti Goldfields of Ghana, as well as Lonrho's platinum interests.

The demerger plan overshadowed Lonrho's 40 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for 1995, which at £161 million were at the top end of most analysts' expectations. Instead, attention was focused on Mr Bock's plans for the rest of the group, particularly its hotels and motor equipment divisions.

Mr Bock said there were no immediate plans to sell the hotels, although an attractive offer would be considered. He said hotels were now performing well with profits up 57 per cent to £44 million.

However, Mr Bock ruled out any immediate sale of Lonrho's Dutton Horshaw car dealership. He said offers had been received "but they did not live up to our expectations". Motor division profits rose 22 per cent to £28 million. The blot in the figures was once again the manufacturing division, which produced a £16 million loss, double that of 1994. Mr Bock said the group was taking "all necessary action" to turn the business around and he expected it would return to profit in this financial year.

What beats the Nokia 101? The New Nokia 909!

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Racing

Dublin bulldozes way to Gold Cup

Graham Rock

DUBLIN FLYER galloped his way towards the Cheltenham Gold Cup with an emphatic victory in the John Bull Chase at Wetherby, but jockeys as much as horses made the headlines yesterday.

The champion leader, Tony McCoy, badly damaged his right wrist while Adrian Maguire sprained a wrist when falling on New Inn at Wetherby. Both went to hospital for precautionary X-rays, but both are expected to ride at Ascot today if they pass the racecourse doctor.

On the same happy note, Norman Williamson's broken right leg is healing well and he is hoping to return in the middle of next month.

McCoy, leading David Brindley by 15 winners in the race for the jockeys' title, fell on Eastern River at the third flight in the Corcomb Handicap Hurdle, bringing down An Buchail Liath.

On his return to the weighing room, McCoy's wrist was so swollen that he was unable to remove his silks. "It's very sore," he said before being driven to hospital.

Williamson reported that his surgeon was pleased with the progress of his fractured leg, saying: "I have to go back for a final X-ray on February 5 and all being well I hope to return at Newbury the following weekend."

Even a trainer as experienced as Tim Forster can

sometimes be caught up in events and after Dublin Flyer had won the Bull Chase comfortably from Travado and Viking Flagship, he admitted that he had not fully realised that the even money favourite had his chance five fences from the straight in Wetherby.

"I was trembling so much I didn't really see what happened," said Forster. He need not have worried. That was Dublin Flyer's only mistake, and he surged clear of his rivals in the straight to win comfortably.

"Brendan (Powell) said he couldn't give the horse a proper ride because he was hanging so badly. He's better going left-handed. I'm not sure where his next race will be, but I think the owner will be pretty keen to go for the Gold Cup," added Forster.

"This horse runs well when fresh, but I think he would have been a race before Cheltenham," said Forster.

While Dublin Flyer's successes in top-class company have been gained at distances short of three miles, the Forster chaser showed considerable stamina as a novice, winning over three and a quarter miles on heavy ground.

"When he was a young horse I thought he'd stay forever, but Graham McCourt rode him at Kempton one day when he was beaten by a horse of Josh Gifford's and that he would not be able to do better letting him bowl along and going all the way over two and a half or two and three-quarter miles.

That's what we've done since."

Dublin Flyer is a best-placed 3-1 for the Gold Cup with Coral's 12-1 with Ladbrokes and Hills, and heads the market for the Martell Grand National at 16-1.

Forster said he would enter Dublin Flyer for Aintree, but his participation would depend on events at Cheltenham.

Nicky Henderson was pleased with Travado and said that his chaser would probably now wait for Cheltenham and Liverpool, while Richard Dunwoody was adamant that it was too early to write off Viking Flagship, who still needed the race.

"Obviously, the Christmas break did not help him, but he takes a lot of getting fit - and we'll know more next time," said Dunwoody. Viking Flagship is out to 8-1 to win the Queen Mother Champion Chase for the third year running.

Another impressive winner yesterday was Scott Banks in the Monkton Handicap Chase at Wetherby. He completed a double for Peter Easterby, who announced that his son, Tim, will be taking over the reins of the stable on February 1.

Easterby, who has won Cheltenham Gold Cups with Saucy Kid, Night Nurse (two) and Sea Pigeon (two), stressed that he would not be relinquishing his licence, which suggests he will be retaining an interest in his Habton Grange stables in Malton.



Sitting pretty... Lorcan Wyer and Scott Banks track Cogent on the first circuit on the way to winning yesterday's Monkton Chase at Wetherby. PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

Sport in brief

Blundell misses out on place with Tyrrell

TYRRELL-YAMAHA yesterday confirmed Ukyo Katayama as one of their drivers for the coming season, virtually ending Mark Blundell's hopes of continuing his Formula One career. The Woking-based outfit, who lost the backing of one of their major sponsors, Nokia, last month, have again opted for Katayama to partner Finland's Mika Salo.

The decision means that Blundell is unlikely to compete in the 1996 season, having already lost out to his fellow Briton Johnny Herbert for the vacant seat alongside Heinz Harald Frentzen at Sauber-Ford.

Syed's winning comeback

MATTHEW SYED, a game down and 16-all in the second, recovered to beat the Swiss champion Thierry Muller for his third win in the Olympic table tennis qualifying competition at Manchester yesterday and ensure a place in the second stage, writes Richard Jago. England's other No. 1, Andrea Holt, also qualified for the second stage, beating Eldjans Janovic of Croatia 21-17, 21-19, 16-21, 27-25 after saving three game points to avoid being taken to a fifth game. Later, wins for Alison Broe and Lisa Lomas ensured that all four British players qualified.

Electric tests for bowler

SRI LANKA have called on a Hong Kong-based professor and his electrical wizardry to decide once and for all whether the off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan throws or bowls. The former Sri Lankan umpire Ajith Perera said that electrodes would be attached to the bowler's elbow to transmit three-dimensional pictures of the arm angle during delivery.

India beat Pakistan by three wickets with five balls to spare in a rain-affected play-off to take third place in the World Masters Series in Sharjah. Pakistan scored 161 for five in their allotted 28 overs and India replied with 162 for seven in 27.1.

King second to 'queen'

BRITAIN'S Jaime King finished second as China's Han Xue broke her own world record in the women's 50 metres breaststroke in a World Cup series event in Beijing yesterday. Han Xue clocked 32.56sec with King touching home in 32.66 and Larisa Lacusta of Romania finishing third in 32.68.

Cash 'paid to Graf's father'

Steffi Graf's father Peter demanded and received large sums of money as payment for her tournament victories, a German Tennis Association official, Ginter Sanders, told a panel in Stuttgart yesterday. Sanders is investigating the alleged payments to players in cash or by cheque were not unusual but the large cash payments the Graf's collected were rare.

Southwell (AW Flat)

Colony Good, 4 Decares Milners, Down Low numbers favored.

1.55 Mr Morley 2.55 Serious Fun
1.55 Dipsator 2.55 Octaloid Chalk
1.55 Hovels 2.55 At The Sway
1.55 Hovels 2.55 Serious Fun

Colony Good, 4 Decares Milners, Down Low numbers favored.

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1.55 Hovels 2.55 Serious Fun

Ascot runners and riders with form guide

1.55 Whitehead 2.55 Seal Like Gold
1.30 Dear Do 3.05 Wall Whirled
2.05 CHOPWELL CURTAINS (top)

Colony Good to last (left) to present, 4 Decares Milners. Figures in brackets after horse's name show days since last race.

1.25 500 YARD HURDLE (QUALIFIED) 2m of CLASS

101 11-12 EXTENSION PROBLEMS (24) N Travado-Derive 5-11-10 C Milner
102 14-11 HENRI LAMAR (24) N Travado-Derive 5-11-10 C Milner
103 1-21 YOUR RISK (22) N Christian 5-11-10 C Milner
104 2-1 ACT OF FAITH (24) N Gandy 5-11-10 C Milner
105 5-4 CORONAL HILL (24) N Gandy 5-11-10 C Milner
106 0-0 HARRY BOY (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
107 10-11 JIMMY-LANE (24) N Christian 5-11-10 C Milner
108 1-2 KIMBERLY (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
109 6-11 MELL (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
110 0-1 FLYING (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
111 4-1 PHILADELPHIA (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
112 0-1 STAFF (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
113 0-1 LORCA (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
114 0-1 SPACIOUS GOLD (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
115 4-1 STEEL BELL (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
116 1-1 WARRIOR (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
117 3-1-1 WHITWATER (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
118 0-1 YOUNG TRISTAN (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
119 0-1 STAFF (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan
120 0-1 TELLICOURT (24) N J. Pagan 7-11-10 W J. Pagan

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Musselburgh

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1.15 Bangle (nb) 2.45 Don't Tell Judy
1.45 Poney Home 2.15 Dingling Arnie
2.45 Lido

Colony Good, 4 Decares Milners.

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Soccer

David Lacey says the sub-committee set up to advise the international committee should commit itself to recommending little change

Venables' line of succession

THE appointment of a new man to run the England team should be a seamless process but rarely is. England managers and coaches are judged by results, and when the results are unsatisfactory there is a desire for a clean break with what has gone before.

No amount of invisible mending will hide the disruption to the evolutionary process of the present England team that is bound to follow the decision of Terry Venables to stand down after the European Championship in June. His successor will be thrust straight into the 1998 World Cup qualifiers, having the usual four-year cycle of England management. Time is on nobody's side.

Yet in one respect the Football Association is in a stronger position than usual. For while Venables attempts to lead England to their first major international honour

since 1966, he will also provide Lancaster Gate with an opportunity it would be unwise to ignore.

The FA does not have to do anything radical. Venables may not be taking England into the next World Cup but this is surely no reason to dismantle a coaching structure the creation of which has been his most valuable achievement so far.

Bryan Robson is already established as Venables's No. 2 and would not be there if the FA did not believe that eventually he would be a leading contender for the England job. Don Howe, England's most experienced coach, served under Ron Greenwood and Bobby Robson and is quasi-technical director until the FA gets around to making a proper appointment.

Bryan Robson said last night that he intended completing his contract with Middlesbrough, but this hardly rules him out for the future.

He can still work with Howe to give the FA the best chance of ensuring the continuity which will be vital when England begin their World Cup programme.

Kevin Keegan, another refusenik as Venables's successor, should also stay on board in charge of the Under-21 squad. Whoever the next coach turns out to be, abolishing the present set-up would be a backward step.

The importance of maintaining a strong thread was emphasised by Graham Kelly, the FA's chief executive, when Venables's impending departure was announced on Wednesday. "Continuity is a major factor in international success," he said, "and one doesn't want to be chopping and changing philosophies, styles, systems and approaches on a regular basis."

The same was true when Ron Greenwood, who managed England from 1977 to 1982, established a manage-

ment structure similar to that which is available to the FA now. Bobby Robson was next in line and behind him came Venables.

Robson's appointment following Greenwood's retirement after the 1982 World Cup, remains the smoothest transfer of power so far, yet the FA missed an opportunity fully to exploit the system that had been created. Now it has a second chance, provided the colts of commitment do not obscure the issue.

The most depressing words to fall from Kelly's lips on Wednesday concerned the time-scale of appointing the next England coach. "It will begin fairly soon," said Kelly carefully. "It will go through the normal method of a sub-committee handling the situation." If ever the FA abolishes sub-committees, No. 16 Lancaster Gate will probably fall down, so deeply are they embedded in the brickwork.

The sub-committee that

chose Venables comprised Sir Bert Millichip, the FA chairman, Noel White, the chairman of the international committee, and Ian Stott, a member of the same committee. Advising them were Kelly, Jimmy Armfield — who had recommended Venables after sounding out managers and coaches — and Rick Parry, the Premier League's chief executive.

A similar sub-committee will similarly have to make recommendations to be approved by the international committee this time. The FA's decision-making process remains cumbersome.

Unwisely, Kelly responded to doubts about England's chances this summer, in the light of Venables's decision, by quoting the example of Denmark, the present European champions, whose coach Richard Moller Nielsen will also be going once the tournament is over. "Nobody suggests that their chances are diminished or harmed in any way," he argued.

A principal reason for this, however, is that once Nielsen, who is taking over Finland, had announced his intentions the Danes appointed Bo Johansson to succeed him in roughly the time it takes the FA to set up a sub-committee.



Kelly... through it again

Newcastle fail to make Papin talk of the Toon

NEWCASTLE UNITED will have to come up with a better offer if they want to sign Jean-Pierre Papin, the 1991 European Player of the Year.

Papin had hoped to escape the bench at Bayern Munich to play a part in United's title challenge convincing enough to earn him a place in the France team to appear in the European Championship this summer. Kevin Keegan had offered to take the 32-year-old international striker on loan. But Bayern yesterday quashed both parties' hopes.

A spokesman for the Bavarian club said: "Newcastle approached us indicating they would like to take Papin on loan until the end of the season. We have said no as we may need him as cover."

The French daily L'Equipe reported yesterday that Keegan had inquired about Papin. "He is a goal-scoring machine," the manager said. Papin said: "I am crossing the fingers of both hands. It would be great to sign for Newcastle."

Marc Hottiger's proposed transfer was also on the verge of collapse last night. Although the Swiss international defender met the Ever-

ton manager Joe Royle yesterday afternoon they were unable to agree on personal terms. "Marc has gone back to Newcastle because the deal is deadlocked at the moment," said Royle.

The Dynamo Moscow midfielder Igor Dobrovolski, a Russian international valued at around £500,000, is likely to join Everton on trial for two weeks.

Interazionale's search for a foreign striker may begin with Alan Shearer, the Premier-ship's top scorer. "We are closely pursuing top attackers," the Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti told Gazzetta dello Sport. "There are many alternatives. One of the most interesting, for example, is Shearer."

Dunfermline players have decided to play tomorrow's game against Clydebank at East End Park even though the funeral of their captain Norrie McCathie will not take place until Tuesday. As a mark of respect McCathie's No. 4 shirt will not be used. The bodies of McCathie, 34, and Amanda Burns, 28, were found at his cottage on Monday.

Premier League officials and representatives of the European Commission yesterday agreed to set up a forum to discuss the full implications of the Bosman case.

Paul Weaver on an unusual press conference for a couple of unlikely recruits to the Mick McCarthy cause

Russian Tank rolls up for a Millwall welcome

MILLWALL provided full instructions and a detailed map of their training ground on Bromley Hill — and that was for the benefit of London-based football writers. Heaven knows how Sergei Yuran and Vasilii Kulkov found the place.

But there they were, sitting with expressions of patient bewilderment either side of their scowling manager Mick McCarthy and their interpreter behind a dining table in south-east London: two of Spartak Moscow's finest, genuine international-class footballers with 74 appearances between them for the Soviet Union, the CIS and Russia.

With Millwall in their post new stadium in Broomfield, the good old had old days of Cold Blow Lane recede space. What would Harry Cripps have made of it? "Cripps, Russkie" perhaps — and then he would have given them a beaming smile and invited them home for a cup of tea.

They looked as though they needed one. "To be fair," explained McCarthy, "the two lads weren't too keen on doing a press conference. They feel a bit embarrassed. They would rather have done it after the Port Vale game on Saturday."

A few football writers were not keen either. Interpreters have an analgesic influence on the spoken word. For all we knew they might have said, "Actually, we are of the opinion that Millwall is a complete dump and you British cannot play football," but we didn't get any of it.

Oh yes, they were settling down very nicely thank you and really looking forward to playing and Millwall was a wonderful club. When they signed last week, did Yuran really mean to say, "We have played for some great clubs in Europe but this is the pinnacle of our careers"?



The Gloms... Yuran (left) and Kulkov are glad to be here and McCarthy is pleased to have them, despite the expressions

It certainly represents a peak for McCarthy, unless he told them he was manager of Manchester United. Yuran, a forward, and the defender-cum-midfielder Kulkov have passed the chance to play in the European Cup by signing for Millwall on loan until the end of the season.

Premiership clubs would have killed to get their hands on this pair. Yuran, 26, has

scored 59 goals from 154 club appearances and eight from 29 internationals. He helped Benfica destroy Arsenal in the 1991-92 European Cup and last season, for Spartak, managed three, including the winner at Blackburn, as his club topped the Champions League Group B. "My nickname is The Tank," he grinned.

Kulkov, 28, has made 45 international appearances and

is renowned for the skill of his passing. Between them they should revive Millwall's faltering promotion drive.

But why Millwall? "There were other clubs but Millwall made a specific offer and it is a promising club with a future. Yes, we had heard of Millwall. We knew they had an American goalkeeper," said Yuran. The only problem so far had been driving on the

other side of the road. Great mates, these. They were just over the 'F' word.

There could be more serious problems ahead. Football stands are full of raging xenophobes of the Portillo persuasion, as David Ginola discovered at Arsenal on Wednesday night. "I hope there will be no problems but a lot depends on your personality," said Yuran, sounding very wise for a tank.

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Jess looks for quick move south

EOIN JESS made himself available to prospective buyers in England yesterday when he turned down a new contract which was the best ever offered to an Aberdeen player.

The international striker or midfielder was assessed by Kenny Dalglish, Blackburn's director of football, in Aberdeen's 2-1 win over Hibs last Monday and has been watched seven times this season by Liverpool's Ron Yeats.

Aberdeen have also had an inquiry from Chelsea and last season Joe Royle of Everton declared an interest. Jess was not at his best then but has since recovered the form that brought him eight caps.

"At 25, I feel if I sign another contract with Aberdeen I'll be too old to go," said Jess, whose current deal expires at the end of June. "I'd like to go to England sooner rather than later because it would be better to be settled before the European Championship finals."

Peter van Vossen, the former Ajax, Anderlecht and Holland striker, arrived at Ibrox last night for talks which seem likely to end with his signing for Rangers today.

The 27-year-old Dutchman, who joined Istanbulspor last summer, is likely to join the Glasgow club in a swap involving Oleg Salenko, the Russian striker who has disappointed since leaving Valencia for Rangers for £2.3 million this season.

Sullivan eyes chance of a second city final

ARSENAL and Aston Villa, both of whom have impressive records in the Coca-Cola Cup, were paired together in the semi-finals of the competition when the draw was made at Wembley Stadium yesterday.

Leeds United, the other Premiership side through to the semi-finals, will face a First Division side in Norwich on Birmingham, who must replay their quarter-final after a 1-1 draw at Carrow Road on Wednesday night.

Villa, who beat Manchester United in the 1994 final and accounted for Arsenal on the way, will be making their 10th appearance in the semi-finals and the London side, winners in 1987 and 1988, are through to this stage for the eighth time. Norwich were winners 11 years ago.

But Birmingham will be confident of beating the Norfolk side in their replay and their colourful owner David Sullivan is savouring the possibility of a "second city" final against Villa, albeit at Wembley.

Sullivan believes City's chances of beating Howard Wilkinson's side over two legs are greater than if they had been paired with Villa or Arsenal. "It's great from our point of view and the chance of playing Villa in the final is unbelievable," he said. "But we still have to overcome Norwich and that will not be easy."

Tennis

Rusedski marches on but other Britons fail to qualify

GREG RUSEDSKI, Britain's No. 1, maintained his fine form in the run-up to next week's Australian Open with a 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Scott Draper of Australia in the quarter-finals of the Peters International in Sydney.

The unseeded Rusedski will now face the fifth-seeded American Todd Martin, and

the top seed Goran Ivanisevic, who overcame Mark Woodforde, 6-4, 7-5, will play Woodforde's long-time doubles partner Todd Woodbridge.

There was a more familiar sorry story in Melbourne, where all three British men attempting to qualify for the Open fell at the first hurdle. Andrew Richardson lost 6-3,

6-2 to the American Steve Campbell, Danny Sapsford was beaten 6-4, 6-3 by the Italian Diego Nargiso, and Nick Beggs went down 7-5, 6-3 to Takao Suzuki of Japan.

Another Briton, Chris Wilkinson, missed a chance of a quarter-final place at the Indonesian Open in Jakarta when he retired from his

match against Paul Haarhuis with dehydration. The Dutchman was 3-0 up in the second set, having won the first 6-1.

Monica Seles survived a barrage from the hard-hitting South African Marisa de Swardt, ranked 37 in the world, to advance to the semi-finals of the Peters International 6-3, 6-2.

Boxing

World-title fight is off again as Hamed undergoes hand surgery

NASEEM HAMED has undergone hand surgery after twice having to postpone his first World Boxing Organisation featherweight title defence.

"He is very upset," said his trainer Brendan Ingle, "but it is just one of those things. There is too much at stake to risk it."

First scheduled for last month, Hamed's London Arena contest against the Mexican Arnulfo Castillo was postponed to February 10 but yesterday the 21-year-old Sheffield fighter underwent keyhole surgery to his right hand in a London clinic to repair damage sustained in taking the title

from the Welshman Steve Robinson.

"It is a worry," his promoter Frank Warren admitted. "Three bones are fused together and need to be separated, but the doctor says it is not career-threatening and we are hoping he could be back in the ring in a month or so. I can't think

of any big puncher who has not had problems with his hands."

Warren is now trying to arrange a new top-of-the-bill fight for his show, which includes the British cruiserweight title rematch between Dennis Andries and the holder Terry Dunstan.

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Leading jockey injured in hurdle fall, page 13

France pick 'rebels' to face England, page 15

Millwall parade their Russians, page 14

Athletics nets £2m sponsorship, page 15

SportsGuardian

ATHERTON SPARKS REVIVAL AFTER THE LIGHTS GO OUT IN BLOEMFONTEIN

England come out of the shadows

BLOEMFONTEIN may have suffered complete power failure yesterday, but for once England's batsmen did not, writes Jack Massarik.

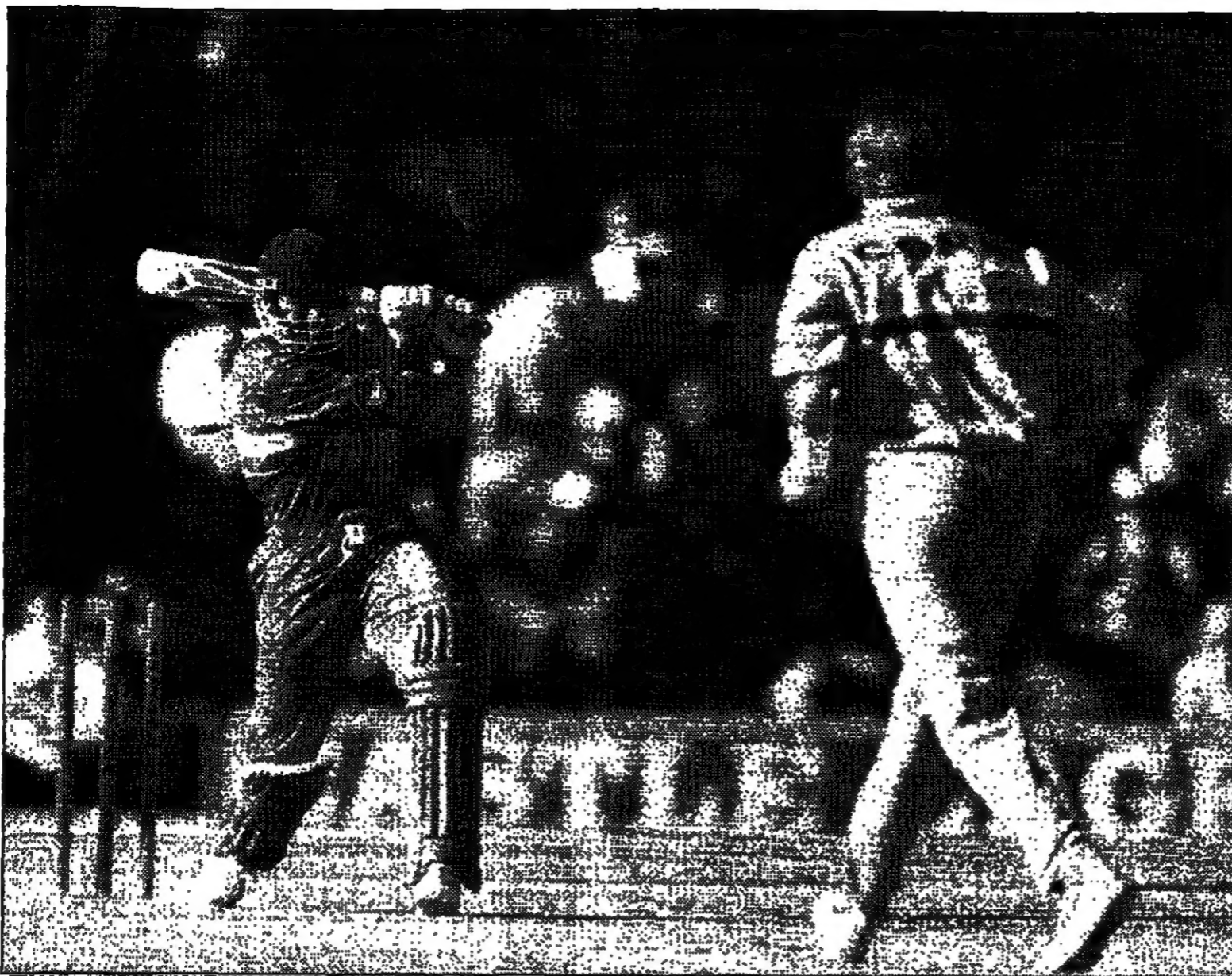
Making light, so to speak, of a 40-minute break when darkness stopped play, they returned to overhaul South Africa's 262 for eight and win the second one-day international by five wickets, levelling the series at 1-1.

It was in the 23rd over of England's innings, with Atherton and Thorpe at the wicket, that the floodlights failed — a setback that recalled the ready wit of Sir Alf Ramsey when something similar once happened at Fortnum & Mason.

"How long do you think they'll take to fix them?" a flanneling Jimmy Hill desperately asked his commentary-box colleague. "Ah hem not an electrician," was Alf's helpful reply.

Here the power supply to the whole area had failed, and had it not been restored the match would have been declared a draw, because England were still eight balls short of the 25 overs stipulated before a win may be decided by wicket-fall or scoring rate.

Match report, page 15



Skittled out... Dominic Cork shatters Hansie Cronje's stumps to strike a middle-order blow for England against South Africa PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE HEWITT

Wavy line that tempts Wigan to Twickenham



Frank Keating

IF WIGAN rugby league club do pick up the gauntlet and enter a team at Twickenham's Middlesex Sevens in May, it will be both a voluptuous gesture of reconciliation to mark the end of the 100 years' war and, at a stroke, an answer to the fevered but hitherto untested tap-room debate of a century about the quality of the codes.

Imagine the drama if Wigan played in the final against the England RU seven, who have applied to the tournament for a late entry as they seek meaningful competition in the abbreviated game in preparation to defend next year in Hong Kong the world title they won at Murrayfield three years ago.

The Middlesex Sevens celebrates its 70th birthday this year, so it should be even more of an end-of-term middle-class boozers' carnival than usual. But if it pitted Wigan against England for quarter of an hour, no one would dare lift a hip-flask to his lips for fear of missing something. Imagine the match-ups: Underwood v Offiah, Carling v Conolly, Guscott v Tulgamala, Clarke v Quinlan.

Even as Wigan were making up their minds this week, their chief executive Brian Pickup said, with challenging resonance: "We always enter every competition to win it, so we would select the strongest possible squad available to us."

Prescott, for many years thereafter defender of the faith as secretary of the RFU at Twickenham.

The man who was to succeed him in that post, the then FIT Lt R G H Weighill, played wing forward that springtime afternoon, which brought the Rugby League men victory by 15-10. Within a year the Capt and FIT Lt retired behind their drawbridge, never again to occupy the same playing field as subordinates from the Rugby League.

Yet at the lunch before that 1944 match, its organiser Capt Stanley Wilson of Northern Command had made "an earnest plea for the playing of an annual Union v League match in the hope of eventually healing the breach".

"In my view," Wilson continued, "the line between amateurism and professionalism is the most wavy line that has ever been drawn." It was to remain so for another half-century, more and more wavy but enduring all the same.

THERE was also an enforced amnesty during the first world war, one that was too long extended by one Welsh village.

Thus it happened that in 1923, in a union game between Morrison and Cwmilyfynall, the referee stopped play and abandoned the match after five minutes when he learned that Billo Rees, home on holiday from playing rugby league for Swinton, was enjoying the game.

Both clubs were suspended for a month by the WRU in consequence.

Nor could Twickenham stop league men infecting their sanctity during National Service duty back in the 1950s and early 1960s, most famously at Grange Road, Cambridge.

It was there that the celebrated bundle of belligerence, young Alex Murphy, was selected at fly-half for the RAF to mark the redoubtable M J K Smith for the "Union Select XV". First tackle, Murphy crash-lands on the whole pack of initials.

"Hey, steady on there, Murphy, this is rugby, old boy, not an organised execution," says the clipped Winco who is captaining the RAF. After treatment, M J K is immediately given the ball again, to be met simultaneously by another stupendous Murphy tackle.

"Look here, stop this at once, Murphy! 22 1944 printed for the Rugby Union v Rugby League game at Olds Stadium.

The League team was made up of sergeants, seamen and corporals. Prop forward for the Union side was Capt R E Replis Murphy: "He won't even be playing ruddy dummies on Saturday if he tries to jink past me like that again!"

Francis the new favourite

Martin Thorpe finds Kevin Keegan and Bryan Robson less than enthusiastic about taking over from Terry Venables this summer

KEVIN KEEGAN and Bryan Robson, the two leading candidates to replace Terry Venables as England coach, appeared to rule themselves out of the succession yesterday, insisting they would be staying with their clubs. Bookmakers immediately installed the Tottenham manager Gerry Francis as the 6-4 favourite.

The Football Association will now have to decide

whether these pledges of loyalty are unequivocal or merely soccer etiquette. Certainly Keegan's views seemed the more steadfast.

"I am interested in managing nobody but Newcastle United," he said yesterday. His chairman Sir John Hall, who would fight hard against his manager moving, then put Keegan on his honour by responding: "The club is delighted with his further commitment to our future."

Robson's pledge to Middles-

brough sounded arguably less watertight. "I have 18 months left on my contract," he said. "And I won't be moving while I'm under that contract."

Earlier he had been even less emphatic about his likely reaction to an FA call. "If it was ever put to me by the FA, I would answer it then. I will come round to that when the time comes."

Robson is the man many inside the game would like to see replace Venables. As his current No. 2 in the England

set-up, the former national captain would offer the FA the continuity and calm transition it is seeking for the 1998 World Cup qualifying campaign which begins in September.

"That will be one of the major factors when we sort the situation out," acknowledged the FA's chief executive Graham Kelly. And the International Committee member Ian Stott, whose criticisms played a part in Venables' decision to quit, also alluded to Robson when he said his choice of successor was someone "currently involved in the England set-up".

If Keegan and Robson prove immune to an FA plea that "your country needs you", then Francis would be an admirable alternative, with the advantage that he negotiates without a contract at Tottenham; his only pledge to them

is that he will stay until the end of this season.

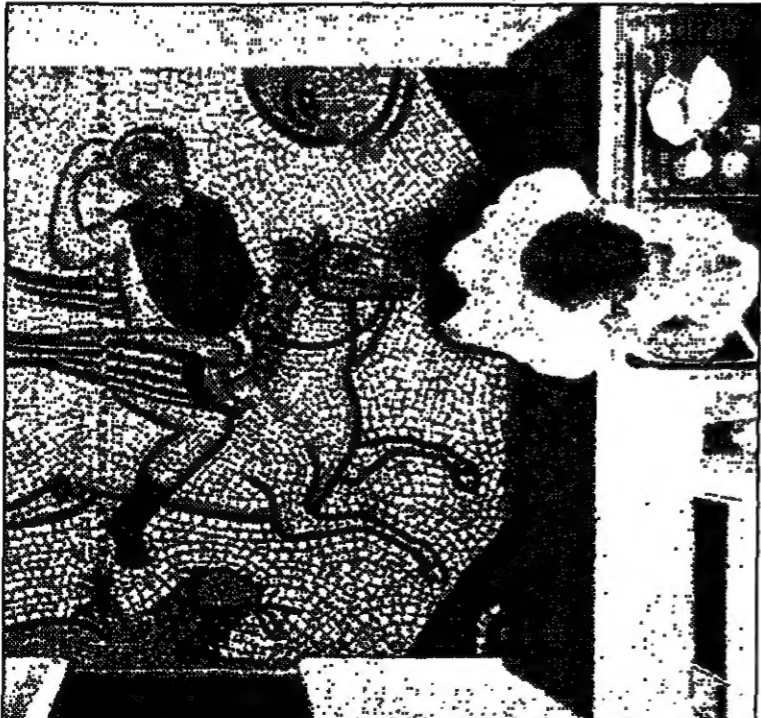
Two things seem certain about the succession, however. The next England manager is unlikely to be a foreigner. "We've always been reluctant to go outside England," said Kelly. And it will not be Ray Wilkins. "I am not experienced enough for all that," he said. "I have a big job at QPR and want to stay and finish that." Unless that was soccer etiquette too.

One intriguing possibility has still not been totally ruled out: a change of mind by Venables. Fuel for this theory was provided by Jimmy Armfield, the FA's special adviser who will help in the search for a coach. Yesterday he said: "I still think a lot can happen between now and July."

David Lacey, page 14



Keegan... staying put



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Highbury pair face FA charge

BRUCE RIOCH and Terry McDermott face a charge of bringing the game into disrepute, after Wednesday's touchline bust-up at Highbury, writes Martin Thorpe.

The fact that what the linesman described as "an aggressive verbal confrontation" was seen by a live television audience may force the Football Association to take action even though there was no physical contact between the Arsenal manager and the Newcastle No. 2 during their stand-up row, described later as "handbags-at-five-paces stuff — the sort of thing that can happen in the heat of the moment during a game" by the Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan.

Rioch and McDermott have 14 days to give the FA their views of the incident, which followed David Ginola's red card for elbowing Lee Dixon in a pulsating Coca-Cola quarter-final, won 2-0 by Arsenal. The match referee Gerald Ashby was also ordered to

submit an instant report.

The police, who went into the referee's room after the game, will not be taking any action. The incident is understood to have been discussed at an Arsenal board meeting yesterday.

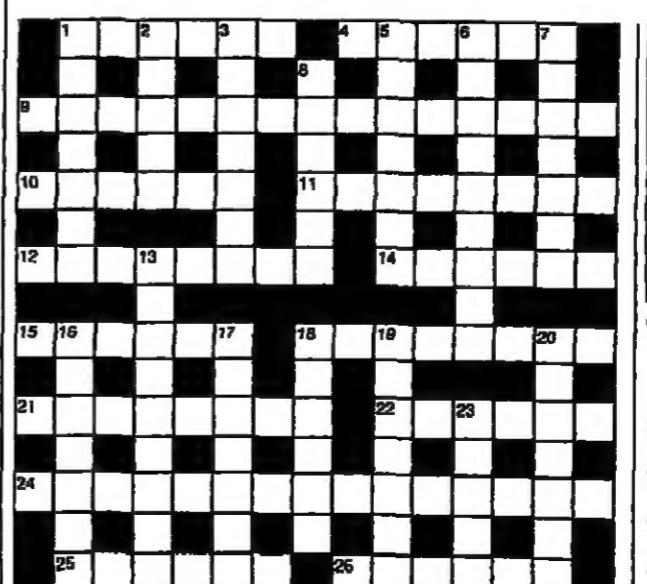
If charged and found guilty, Rioch and McDermott would face fines and/or touchline bans. Rioch admitted he lost his temper after McDermott allegedly said: "You've punched a few players in your career."

The referee has confirmed he sent Ginola off for the elbowing alone and not as the result of a second yellow card. Keegan intends to appeal against the earlier booking.

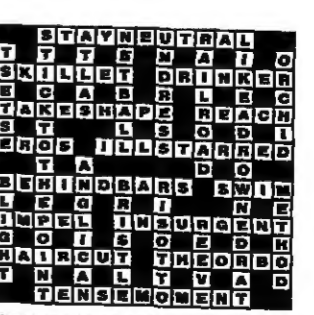
Ginola, who will now have to serve a three-match ban, is one booking away from a further two-match ban. Keegan expressed concern that these problems could persuade the Frenchman to leave Newcastle. "He's very down," said Keegan. "I would hate to lose him."

Guardian Crossword No 20,547

Set by Mercury



- Across**
- 1 It's pointless John taking a month to find Mary's husband (6)
 - 4 Mum copies forms (6)
 - 9 Vista in Blenheim (anagram) (3,9,3)
 - 10 Loves to include Verdi, not one to exaggerate (6)
 - 11 see 12
 - 12, 11, 15 Men hopes to get to his chef (anagram) (3,5,2,6,2,4)
 - 14 Worked hard to get model tipsy (6)
 - 15 see 12
 - 18 Having car and no money one abandoned self-government (8)
 - 21 Tyrant rejected policemen, thanks to Hill (8)
- Down**
- 22 Left out, elect two fellows to enter result (6)
 - 24 Not a genuine buyer? (11,4)
 - 25 Eccentric nurse goes round to get soaked (6)
 - 26 Paid for a half bottle of spirit (6)
- Solution tomorrow**
- 1 Have Jack standing around Head Office — people worship him (7)
 - 2 One may be going downhill fast (5)
 - 3 Friend takes five eggs and a cake (7)
 - 5 Something nurse wear at home, naturally (7)
 - 6 Summary plus something charged for accuracy (8)
 - 7 It's shiny and leaves pan gleaming inside (7)
 - 8 Held by a girl or out of the sea (6)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,546

- 13 Brief ended without a note being out (8)
- 16 Threatening to ring less ring in (7)
- 17 Greatest and once the top Turkish regiment (7)
- 18 Time to break off course (8)
- 19, 20 He met it in Cheam (anagram) (3,4,7)
- 23 Surface of gem an expert inserted 12 inches (5)

This is not obviously cheering fare. You can understand a publisher choosing not to issue a new Graham Swift just in time for Christmas.

Adrian Poole

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